PARTISAN REVIEW

PR

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1941

GEORGE L. K. MORRIS
The Mechanics of Abstract Painting

W. R. RODGERS
End of a World (a long poem)

PHILIP RAHV
Hawthorne's Dark Lady

ELIZABETH BISHOP
Three Key West Poems

MORTON G. WHITE
Darwin-Marx-Wagner vs. Mr. Barzun

PAUL GOODMAN
The Facts of Life (a story)

VICTOR SERGE
French Writers, Summer 1941

•

"What Is Fascism?"
. . . the discussion continued by Victor Serge, Marceau Pivert and Dwight Macdonald

5

25¢ A COPY

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"DANGEROUS THOUGHTS"

An Editorial Statement

The Japanese have a "Dangerous Thoughts" law which provides for the imprisonment of all citizens found with such weapons in their possession. The Roosevelt Administration is trying to instal this feature in the American penal code. On July 15 last the Department of Justice obtained an indictment in Minneapolis against 29 trade unionists and members of the Socialist Workers Party ("Trotskyists"). It is charged that the defendants "did unlawfully, wilfully, knowingly and feloniously conspire, plan, combine, confederate and agree together . . . to destroy by force the Government of the United States of America, and to oppose the authority thereof."

The indictment mentions no specific instance of the defendants having DONE anything along these lines, for the good reason that there is nothing to mention. The kind of armed, conspiratorial putsch which the Government tries to hang on the Trotskyists conflicts with the basic principles of Marxist revolutionary tactics. Nor does it seem likely that any group of sane persons with a CLAIMED membership of 3,000 would today conspire "to destroy by force the Government of the United States of America."

No, even the Department of Justice can't take the conspiracy angle very seriously. This appears in reality as an attempt to put citizens in prison for their political opinions. One leg of the indictment rests on Section 6, Chapter 18, of the U. S. Code, a law passed in 1861 to deal with "copperhead" conspiracies behind the Northern lines! The other leg is the notorious Smith Act, passed last year by Congress, under which, according to I. F. Stone in the "Nation": "For the first time in peace since the Alien and Sedition Laws of John Adams, a mere expression of opinion is made a Federal crime."

The Roosevelt Administration is serving fair notice on American radicals that it is prepared to meet their criticisms and arguments in future with prison terms. It has gone farther along the road of totalitarian stifling of free speech than the British Government has gone in two years of actual warfare.

If the President and his Attorney General win the Minneapolis case, free discussion of war policy, of alternatives to capitalism, of any radical social changes will become impossible in this country. If they win, no revolutionary opponent of capitalism is safe from prison —including more than one editor and contributor to this magazine.

They must not win! We have our political differences with the indicted Trotskyists, but we give them our full support in this case. They must be freed and the Government's indictment must be exposed for the gross frame-up it threatens to be.

We agree with the American Civil Liberties Union that this is the most important civil liberties case in decades. The A.C.L.U. is taking part in the defense. Funds are urgently needed. We appeal to our readers for contributions, which we will pass on to the A.C.L.U.*

*Please make checks payable to: The American Civil Liberties Union.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PARTISAN REVIEW

VOLUME VIII, No. 5 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1941

THREE POEMS		*W. R. Rodgers*
End of a World	354	
Ireland	359	
An Irish Lake	361	
THE DARK LADY OF SALEM	362	*Philip Rahv*
THREE KEY WEST POEMS		*Elizabeth Bishop*
Jeronymo's House	382	
Cootchie	384	
Sea-Scape	384	
THEY TURNED HER BACK	385	*Bharati Kumari Sarabhai*
FRENCH WRITERS, SUMMER 1941	387	*Victor Serge*
THE FACTS OF LIFE	389	*Paul Goodman*
ON THE MECHANICS OF ABSTRACT PAINTING	403	*George L. K. Morris*
Illustrations	416	
"WHAT IS FASCISM?"—THE DISCUSSION CONTINUED		
1. A Letter to the Editors	418	*Victor Serge*
2. Fascism and Capitalism	423	*Marceau Pivert*
3. Add "End of German Capitalism"	426	*Dwight Macdonald*
BOOKS		
The Mind Creeps Back	431	*Morton G. White*
Luxemburg's Life	435	*Clement Greenberg*
The World Battle	436	*George L. K. Morris*
Democracy and the War Effort	438	*Dwight Macdonald*
LETTERS	439	
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	402	

Editors: CLEMENT GREENBERG, DWIGHT MACDONALD, GEORGE L. K. MORRIS, WILLIAM PHILLIPS, PHILIP RAHV. Business Managers: NANCY MACDONALD, WILLIAM PETERSEN.

PARTISAN REVIEW is published at 45 Astor Place, New York, N. Y.

PARTISAN REVIEW is published six times a year. Subscription: $1.00 yearly; Canada, $1.15; other foreign countries, $1.30. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright September, 1941, by PARTISAN REVIEW. Reentered as second-class matter, January 20, 1940, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Three Poems by W. R. Rodgers

END OF A WORLD

OLD MAN—

Yes, in one night all the marble heroes
Came down from their high decks and marched away
Into anonymity like pierrots,
Our flags climbed down their own ropes like spiders
And scuttled off, also the tame salute
Went wild and flew away out of our hands,
Our roof of government slumped, and our laws
Slid like slates, unsettling everywhere,
Title's kite-string broke, and Rank's anchor sprang.
I could tell you a hundred happenings
Of that anxious night, I could recount how
Our social circus shook, angry cages burst,
The animal acts escaped and ran amok,
The lion-tamer Discipline was mauled,
Sentiment bitten by his own charmed snake,
The lariat Intellect lassoed itself,
And the sly Illusionist sought safety
In his own deceptions. And that wild pig
Contempt, poking in our hearts' levelled drives
Of habit, and old holdings of desire,
Snooped out the pious wish and snouted up
The planted response. And, on top of that,
Scathing winds of hate came, bringing locusts
Which ate our fig-leaf sensitivity,
Our grass-skirt insularity and poise.
Freely our frozen loyalties thawed, and
An annulling flood suddenly straddled
All the lock-gates of class, caste, and custom,
All the sluices and allotted safeties
Of our civilisation, all names, norms,
Numbers, paths, proprieties, all were drowned
In rebellion's mound of mounting waters.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And we who were warned, like Noah, floated
Upright on that sea, and saw the broken
Pieces of our world bobbing past us,
Saw the contents of History's tied shops
Spread on the flood untidily, saw all
The bric-a-brac, the crates of government
Tumbled out, old boxes of tricks, ends, means,
Poses and properties, plumes, palliums,
Exact dignity, calculated awe,
The props and backdrops of authority
—We saw them all swept past us. There sprawled
The dead diplomat, inseparable
On his finger-end the skeleton-keys
Of compromise and ambiguity.
There too floated the drowned scholar, his hand
Holding his pat reference and apt tag,
Index and document, his subscription
To Authority. There danced the landsman who
Collected sea-birds' eggs and sailors' slang,
The expert alpinist bed-rid from birth,
The strategist who never met his gun,
The record-keepers of record-breakers,
The lackers and onlookers of greatness,
Eunuch students of love and peeping Toms,
Caretakers of leapfrogging pedigrees
—All were there, all the tasters and testers
Of things rare, intricate, antique, lofty,
Exotic, difficult, all who had sieved
The theory from the practice, the fancy
From the fact, the seekers and abstractors
Of size, shape, surface, sound—all who kept pure
The exquisite equation of self, all
Fallen to pieces like a jogged jig-saw,
The end of a world witty and heartless.
And we, only, were left, a plain people
Without name or memory, lifted up
On the obliterating back of doom.

But floods divided, dropped, and brought to view

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A levelled world waiting to be made new
Old hives were honeyless, bee-lines led nowhere,
Roads still ran, but only to link ruins,
No mat or footmark, glass or gaze,—eagles
Had picked the eyes and meaning out of maps.
Some, homesick for the fixed features, argued
That we would never find a way, would move
And wander on through featureless land
Looking for aims, as on some Arctic waste
The lost explorer moves, moored to sameness
Of snow, impossible to memorise,
No hook for eye, no hug for heart, no route
For foot, no return, no base. So they said.
But we took bearings with our high hope's help,
Struck stakes out of our strict resolves, drove roads,
Found knowledge hidden in our needs,
Plotted new maps out of our own exploits,
Our thirsts sank wells, turned water into wine,
Our appetities caught food on the wing, we,
Not counting any wound we gave or got,
Ran past warnings, threw bridges over seas,
Or, impatient, walked on the water. Death
Timed us. Our wills bounded lightly across
The single and yielding ledge of the moment,
We heard it falling behind us, but we
Looked not back. On that narrow road we strode
Straight forward to desire, stripped, not stopping
Or side-stepping into explanation.
No blow could dent us, or kiss relax us,
Or risk excuse us from our conclusion.
We shook off the detaining hands of friends,
Refused ease. Some said we were insensitive,
But no! At the heart's heat our putty thoughts
Had hardened into stubborn purposes,
And our hopes, so often lightly relaxed,
No longer now snapped back to apathy
But stayed stretched out to sticking point, intent
On attainment. Until in every place,
Camp, court, clearing, meeting-ground, where once stood

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Like tombstones the jacked-up effigies, plaques,
And rigorous monuments of Justice,
As reminders and remainders—just men
Walked, where Glory mildewed in medals
Or lurked in archives and excavations,
Men lived and laughed gloriously now,
The Word made flesh, melted into motion.

That, stranger, is my tale, learn from it how
Instantly an old world with ingrown eye
Engrossed in reflection, immobilised
In precedent, its body dropsical
With tradition, but poised and sprung on awe,
Fell. For the flood came, and in one night
The steep gradients of society,
Of luxury and lack, of fee and dole,
Slid, were levelled and laved. No doubt these would
Have waited till they were weathered away,
Or till hill lent hollow an impulsive hand.
But the flood laughed, and lo, the solid land
Flowed like sand before that thaw of heart and
Spate of hate, heaped high by hindrance. The heart
That hates has no halts, and no brakes except
Those of love. So do no idle talking
About greased and gradual changes, or
An oiled, reasoned and orderly advance,
Agreed instalments of progress. Know, now,
That an old world has no heart in moving,
It shifts, but only to retain its ease,
Adopts and adapts the new positions
But only to occupy them against
Newcomers, advancing only itself.
Yet I would say, and would say it to those
Who from the grandstand of dreams see themselves
Crashing through crowds to single glory,
Those who are stoics on their own estates
(Free to indulge themselves or to refrain),
Forgetting the hokers and the grimed stokers
Of their civilised gains—O I would warn,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Would warn all the godlike, the ogreish, the great,
That men who hate to live will live to hate,
Will live like maimed Samson, hugging his shame
For long years, but alert for the moment
That levelled himself and his lords under
One impending and humiliating thunder.

STRANGER—
Now that you have wrought your revolution,
Turned jungle into park, Jack into Jill,
Have tamed all the lions (except perhaps
A few left for tourists and for contrast),
Now that all are owners of this estate,
Suited and sated—do you not suspect
That this new skin is the integument
Of unamenable nature, I mean
That if you strip this bright new world you'll get
The old black underwear of greed unchanged.

OLD MAN—
O you are one of those mirror men who
Wave and weep goodbye to themselves leaving
On the train for To-morrow, who point back
To the iron track of instinct, the tied train
Of events, the irreversible wheels
Of history, and so relax on cushions
Of excuse, forgetting that action
Is in your hands, and time under your feet,
And the engine answers for speed or stop.
The shadow on the future is your own
Unfocussed fear, thrown prodigally;
And your doubts are the private detectives
Employed by your dislike, to make a case
Against change or choice. Will you not be warned?
O listen now. Doom strikes strictly as clocks.
Go home to your own land; it is late there, and
The fading day of safety involves you.
The rooks boil and bubble above the woods,
But will soon settle. Only the warplanes
Still stretch and strain the sky. Their auguries

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Are against you and what you undertake.
Perhaps you will be warned, but I think not.
In this, as in other things, it happens
That there is no royal goad to learning,
But only rote and toil, tears and lean years.
Seldom unto as dim eyes as yours arose
Indemnifying faith and further sight
Immediately. Yet do not doubt
That to your darkened towns and drowsy fields
Day will return, day with a lovelier face,
And voices, children's children's voices, will
Rejoice in the dew-washed and discharged air
Of tears. O let their laughter be your care,
And light will be the load you carry then.

IRELAND

O these lakes and all gills that live in them,
These acres and all legs that walk on them,
These tall winds and all wings that cling to them,
Are part and parcel of me, bit and bundle,
Thumb and thimble. Then I am, but none more
Than the mountains of Mourne that turn and trundle
Roundly like slow coils of oil along the shore
Of Down and on inland. When I begin
To draw my memory's nets and outlines in,
Then through its measured mesh escapes the fuss
Of trivial places, all finicalness.
Of the Mournes I remember most the mist,
The grey granite goose-fleshed, the minute
And blazing parachutes of fuchsia, and us
Listening to the tiny clustered clinks
Of little chisels tinkling tirelessly
On stone, like a drip of birds' beaks picking
Rapidly at scattered grain. I think of those
Wet sodden days when we, for miles and miles,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Steadily padded the slow sponge of turf
That squealed and squelched cold between our bared toes;
Or on airy ridge, urgent and agile, ran,
A chain of jigging figures on the sky-line;
Or, skilfully in file, followed, tricking
The hoops of hairy bramble in our path,
Poking in undergrowth and picking
The bitter berries that prickle the springs
Of the dark mouth. There was Bloody River
Where the granite pickles bristled and blazed, and
Ebullient water bellied over
Boulders with the sweep of a bell's shoulders,
And pancaked out in pools. Drinihilla
Where the gales smoothed and glued back the eye-lids.
The granite river that is called Kilkeel,
Whose beds were clean and gritty like oatmeal.
And Commedagh in whose high summer heat
Nothing stirred, only the shimmering bleat
Of sheep; and we, as we sat and chattered,
Marked the motionless shine of falls far-off
On Binyon, and nothing at all mattered.
And Legawherry so soft and grassy,
Where the white scuts lazily scattered,
And never in their remotest burrows
The ferret Fear came fiercely after them.
Slieve-na-brock and its long pig-tail trickles
That hung down the bald rocks, reaching to
The glossy backs of the bracken. And Donard
Where, high over all hanging, the strong hawk
Held in his eyes whole kingdoms, sources, seas,
And in his foot-hooks felt all things wriggling
Like the single string of river niggling
Among the enormous mountain bottoms.
Bearnagh and Lamigan and Chimney-Rock,
Spelga, Pulgarve, and Cove—all these names lie
Silently in my grass-grown memory,
Each one bright and steady as a frog's eye;
But touch it and it leaps, leaps like a bead
Of mercury that breaks and scatters

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Suddenly in a thousand shining strings
And running spools and ever-dwindling rings
Round the mind's bowl, till at last all drop
Lumped and leaden again to one full stop.

AN IRISH LAKE

There in the hard light
Dark birds, pink-footed, dab and pick
Among the addery roots and marrowy stones,
And the blown waves blink and hiccup at the lake's
Lip. A late bee blares and drones on inland
Into a cone-point of silence. And I
Lying at the rhododendron's root
Look through five fingers' grille at the lake
Shaking, at the bare and backward plain, and
The running and bending hills that carry
Like a conveyer belt the bright snail-line
Of clouds along the sky all day unendingly.

There, far from the slack noose of rumour
That tightens into choking fact, I relax,
And sounds and sights and scents sail slowly by.
But suddenly, like delicate and tilted italics,
The up-standing birds stretch urgently away
Into the sky as suddenly grown grey.
Night rounds on Europe now. And I must go,
Before its hostile faces peer and pour
Over the mind's rim enveloping me,
And my so-frightened thoughts dart here and there
Like trout among their grim stony gazes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Dark Lady of Salem*

Philip Rahv

Because I seek an image, not a book. . . .
W. B. YEATS

HAWTHORNE IS GENERALLY spoken of as a novelist of sin, but the truth is that he is not a novelist, at least not in the sense in which the term is commonly used, nor is sin wholly and unequivocally his subject. What that subject is remains to be defined, though by way of introduction it might be said that it is less a subject than a predicament. Or, better still, the predicament is the subject.

What is the intention of the novel as we have come to know it? In the broadest sense, it is to portray life as it is actually lived. Free access to experience is the necessary condition of the novel's growth as well as the objective guaranty of its significance; experience is at once its myth and its reason; and he who shuns experience is no more capable of a convincing performance in its sphere than a man unnerved by the sight of blood is capable of heroic feats on the battlefield. Now Hawthorne lived in an age when it was precisely experience—or, at any rate, those of its elements most likely to engage the interests of an artist—that was least at the disposal of the imaginative American, whose psychic resistance to its appeal was everywhere reinforced by the newness and bareness of the national scene, by its much-lamented "paucity of ingredients." It is this privation that accounts for Hawthorne's chill ideality, for his tendency to cherish the fanciful at the expense of the substantial and to reduce the material world to the all-too-familiar abstractions of spiritual law and of the moral conscience. Two strains mingle in his literary nature: the spectral strain of the Gothic tale and the pietistic strain of Christian allegory, and both contribute to his alienation from the real.†

*This essay is a chapter from a book on the evolution of the hero and heroine in American fiction.

†In his *American Prose Masters*, W. C. Brownell observes that Hawthorne's "particular genius took him out of the novelist's field altogether. His novels are not novels. They have not the reality of novels, and they elude it not only in their personages but in their picture of life in general." But it is hardly a question of Hawthorne's "particular genius" leading him away from the novel. His "particular genius" cannot be assessed apart from the forces that shaped its expression. If we accept Brownell's definition of the novel as the medium of the actual, it can be stated flatly that neither Hawthorne nor any of his contemporaries succeeded in mastering it.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet there is in this writer a submerged intensity and passion —a tangled imagery of unrest and longing for experience and regret at its loss which is largely ignored by those of his critics who place him too securely within the family-circle of the New England moralists. His vision of evil carries something more than a simple, one-way assertion of traditional principles; it carries their negation as well. He was haunted not only by the guilt of his desires but also by the guilt of his denial of them. The puritan in him grappled with the man of the nineteenth century—historically a man of appetite and perspective; and the former did not so easily pacify and curb the latter as is generally assumed.

The whole tone and meaning of Hawthorne's work, it seems to me, turns on this conflict.

In his own estimate he was a "romancer," and his insistence on designating himself as such should not be overlooked. Time and again he admonished his readers not to expect from him that "fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's existence" which is the mark of the novelist. He took pains to distinguish between the romance and the novel in order to lay claim, though not without due apologies, to the latitude inherent in the earlier genre. Yet he was fully aware of its deficiencies, aware that the freedom it afforded was more apparent than real, committing him to all sorts of dodges and retreats to which his artist's conscience could not be reconciled. This explains his habit of referring to his own compositions in a disparaging manner as "fancy-pictures" that could not survive a close comparison with the actual events of real lives.

Even while writing *The Scarlet Letter*, the theme of which suited him perfectly, he publicly regretted the "folly" of flinging himself back into a distant age and attempting to create "a semblance of a world out of airy matter." He would have been far better served, he goes on to confess in that superb essay, *The Custom House*, had he sought his themes in the "warm materiality" of the daily scene. "The fault," he concludes, "was mine. The page of life that was spread out before me seemed dull and commonplace, only because I had not fathomed its deeper import. A better book than I shall ever write was there. . . . At some future day, it may be, I shall remember a few scattered fragments and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

broken paragraphs, and write them down, and find the letters turn to gold upon the page." But he was fated to be disappointed. The golden glow of reality never suffused his pages. Instead of entering the waking world of the novel, he remained to the last a "romancer" under the spell of that shadowy stuff which he at once loved and hated.

In the development of narrative-prose his place is decidedly among the pre-novelists—a position which he holds not alone but in the company of Poe and Melville and virtually the entire clan of classic American writers who, at one time or another, turned their hand to the making of fiction. The fact is that no novels, properly speaking, were produced in America until late in the nineteenth century, when the moralistic, semi-clerical outlook which had so long dominated the native culture-heroes finally began to give way. The freedom promised by the Transcendentalist movement of the mid-century had not gone beyond a certain philosophical warmth and ardor of purpose. Though this movement expanded American thought, in itself this did not suffice to release the novelistic function. The release was effected only after the Civil War, when the many-sided expansion of American life created a new set of circumstances more favorable to artists whose business is with the concrete manifestations of the real and with its everyday textures. Then it was that James and Howells, susceptible, in different degrees, to the examples of European writing, came forward with new ideas, plans, and recipes.

Hawthorne's isolation from experience incapacitated him as a novelist. Yet he longed to break through this isolation, searching for the key that would let him out of the dungeon and enable him to "open intercourse with the world." "I have not lived," he cried, "but only dreamed of living. . . . I have seen so little of the world that I have nothing but thin air to concoct my stories of. . . ." Even the moderately candid biographies of him show that such protests were typical of his state of mind. And since these protests also inform his fiction, even if only in a tortuous and contradictory fashion, it can be said that his basic concern as a writer, though expressed in the traditional-moral terms of the problem of sin, was at bottom with the problem of experience—experience, however, not in the sense of its open representation in the manner of a novel-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ist, but simply in the sense of debating its pros and cons, of examining its good and evil, its promise and threat.

This preparatory scrutiny of experience constitutes his real subject, which is obscured by his creative means of allegoric construction and lavish employment of fantasy. His subject and the method he adopted to give it fictional form are incongruously related, but it was the only method available to him in his situation and, despite its faults, it permitted the growth of a novelistic embryo in each of his romances. That which is most actual in his work is comprised in these embryos; the rest—coming under the head of "romance"—is composed by his Gothic machinery and fed by the ceaseless pullulations of the sin-dogma. Knowingly or not, he indicated his own practice in remarking: "Realities keep in the rear, and put forward an advance-guard of show and humbug."

But the split in his emotional and intellectual nature prevented him from ever resolving the conflict of value and impulse implicit in his subject. All he could do is reproduce his predicament within his creations. On the one hand he thought it desirable "to live throughout the whole range of one's faculties and sensibilities" and, on the other, to play the part of a spiritualized Paul Pry "hovering invisible around men and women, witnessing their deeds, searching into their hearts, borrowing brightness from their felicity and shade from their sorrow, *and retaining no emotion peculiar to himself*." In other words, he wanted the impossible—to enjoy the warmth and vitality of experience without exposing himself to its perils. His entire heritage predisposed him to regard a welcoming and self-offering attitude to experience as the equivalent of a state of sin; and though he was inclined to doubt the justice and validity of this cruelly schematic equation, its sway over him nevertheless told in the end. It barred him from any patent commitment to that program of personal liberation which his successors in the American creative line were later to adopt and elaborate into peculiarly indigenous forms of literary art. Is experience identical with sin?—and if so, is sin the doom of man or his salvation? To these queries he provided no clear rejoinder, but his bent was to say one thing on the surface of his work, on the level of its manifest content, while saying something else in its depths, in its latent meanings. He tried to serve at once the old and the new gods, and in the main it is within the active play of this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ambivalence, of this sundered devotion, that he achieved his unique color and interest. His incubus he taught to poetize.

The constraint under which he labored had its source, of course, in the old Calvinist faith, but he was born too late to know it for what it once was. Of religion, indeed, he knew little beyond its fears. Originally a powerful vision of man's relation to God, the puritan orthodoxy was now reduced to a narrow moral scheme with clerical trappings. And Hawthorne's dilemma was that though the supernatural hardly existed for him in any realm save that of the fanciful, he was none the less unable to free himself from the perception of human destiny in terms of sin and redemption, sacrilege and consecration. The sacramental wine had turned to poison in his cup. His dreams abounded in images of his ancestors rising from their graves and of himself walking down Main Street in a shroud. No wonder, then, that he tended to conceive of the past as a menace to the living, as a force the ghastly fascination of which must be resisted.

The House of the Seven Gables is one long symbolisation of this feeling. "In this age," preaches Holgrave, the young man who stands for the renovation of life, "the moss-grown and rotten Past is to be torn down, and lifeless institutions to be thrust out of the way, and their dead corpses buried, and everything to begin anew. . . . What slaves we are to bygone times—to Death. . . We live in dead men's houses . . . as in this of the Seven Gables. . . . The house ought to be purified with fire,—purified till only its ashes remain." Still, at the same time as Hawthorne abused the past and remonstrated against its morbid influences, he continued to indulge his taste for gloom and moldiness—for "old ideals and loitering paces and muffled tones." And as the years passed he yielded more and more to this tendency, with the result that in his last phase his mind faltered—it had lost, as he himself admitted, "its fine edge and temper"—and he could produce nothing but such fragmentary and essentially pointless allegories as *Septimius Felton* and *The Dolliver Romance.*

The conflict in him is clearly between a newborn secular imagination, as yet untried and therefore permeated with the feeling of shock and guilt, and the moribund religious tradition of old New England. It is a conflict which has seldom been detected by his critics, who have for the most part confounded his inner theme

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of experience with the all-too-apparent theme of sin. Yet the two themes, regardless of their mutual relation from a theological standpoint, are quite distinct as life-elements—though Hawthorne could not but confuse them. Perhaps it is this that was intuitively sensed by D. H. Lawrence, when he spoke of the duplicity of that "blue-eyed *Wunderkind* of a Nathaniel," thus construing as double-dealing a double-mindedness the roots of which lie deep in American history. But the melodramatic twist of Lawrence's insights is scarcely a valid reason for discounting them. He accurately noted the split in Hawthorne between his outward conformity and the "impeccable truth of his art-speech," between his repressed under-meanings and the moonshiny spirituality of his surface.

The evidence, of course, is in the tales and romances. There is one heroine they bring to life who is possibly the most resplendent and erotically forceful woman in American fiction. She dominates all the other characters because she alone personifies the contrary values that her author attached to experience. Drawn on a scale larger than reality, she is essentially a mythic being, the incarnation of hidden longings and desires, as beautiful, we are repeatedly told, as she is "inexpressibly terrible," a temptress offering the ascetic sons of the puritans the "treasure-trove of a great sin."

We come to know this dark lady under four different names—as Beatrice in the story *Rappaccini's Daughter*, Hester in *The Scarlet Letter*, Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*, and Miriam in *The Marble Faun*. Her unity as a character is established by the fact that in each of her four appearances she exhibits the same physical and mental qualities and plays substantially the same role. Hawthorne's description of her is wonderfully expressive in the fullness of its sensual imaginings. He is ingenious in devising occasions for celebrating her beauty, and conversely, for denigrating, albeit in equivocal language, her blonde rival—the dove-like, virginal, snow-white maiden of New England. But the two women stand to each other in the relation of the damned to the saved, so that inevitably the dark lady comes to a bad end while the blonde is awarded all the prizes—husband, love, and absolute exemption from moral guilt. There is obviously an obsessive interest here in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the psychosexual polarity of dark and fair with its symbolism of good and evil—a polarity which in Fenimore Cooper's treatment (in *The Last of the Mohicans* and *The Deerslayer*) is little more than a romantic convention but which both in Hawthorne and in Melville (Hautia and Yillah in *Mardi* and Isabel and Lucy in *Pierre*) acquires a newly intensive meaning.

Beatrice, of *Rappaccini's Daughter*, is as luxuriant as any of the gem-like flowers in her father's garden of poisonous plants. She looks "redundant with life, health, and energy . . . beautiful as the day, with a bloom so deep and vivid that one shade more would have been too much"; her voice, "rich as a tropical sunset," makes her lover Giovanni "think of deep hues of purple or crimson and of perfumes heavily delectable." Hester, of *The Scarlet Letter*, is "tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow. . . . She had in her nature a rich, voluptuous, Oriental characteristic." In the redundancy of her charms Zenobia, of *The Blithedale Romance*, is fully the equal of Hester Prynne. "Zenobia was an admirable . . . a magnificent figure of a woman, just on the hither verge of her maturity . . . her hand, though very soft, was larger than most women would like to have . . . though not a whit too large in proportion with the spacious plan of her development . . . the native glow of coloring in her cheeks, and even the flesh-warmth of her round arms, and what was visible of her full bust—in a word, her womanliness incarnate—compelled me sometimes to close my eyes. . . . One felt an influence breathing out of her such as we might suppose to come from Eve, when she was just made . . . a certain warm and rich characteristic . . . the whole woman was alive with a passionate intensity in which her beauty culminated. Any passion would have become her well; and passionate love, perhaps, best of all." And Miriam, of *The Marble Faun*, also had "a great deal of color in her nature . . . a beautiful woman . . . with dark eyes . . . black, abundant hair . . . a dark glory."

It is plain that the physical characteristics of these four heroines are interchangeable, and this cannot be due to poverty of invention on Hawthorne's part. What it suggests, rather, is a strong fixation on a certain type of woman, in every way the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

opposite of the sexually anesthetic females to whom he officially paid homage.* The dark lady is above all an ambivalent love-object**; but beyond that she makes visible that desire for an open-handed conduct of life and individual fulfilment which was in later years to become the major concern of American writing. Reduced to more realistic proportions but none the less still invested with mythic powers, she reappears, in such novels as Sherwood Anderson's *Dark Laughter* and *Many Marriages,* in the part of the ideal love-partner for whom thwarted husbands desert their wives; and a character like Hemingway's Maria (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*)—likewise not a "real" person but a dream-image of sexual bliss—is clearly in her line of descent. In her latter-day mutations, however, the sinister side of this heroine has been obliterated. She is now wholly affirmed.

But insofar as they no longer threaten us, these idealized modern women have also ceased to be thoughtful. The Anderson and Hemingway girls leave us without any distinct impression of their minds, whereas the dark lady of Salem displays mental powers that are the counterpart of her physical vitality. Invariably she dominates, or seeks to dominate, the men she loves, and her intellectual range equals and at times even exceeds theirs. She not only acts but thinks passionately, solving the problem of the relation between the sexes in a radical fashion and subverting established values and standards. After being cast out by the community, Hester, we are told, "assumed a freedom of speculation . . . which our forefathers, had they known it, would have held to

*In this connection a revealing passage from W. D. Howells' *Literary Friends and Acquaintances* is worth citing. Howells is telling of his first meeting with Hawthorne in 1860: "With the abrupt transition of his talk throughout, he [Hawthorne] began to speak of women, and said that he had never seen a woman whom he thought quite beautiful. In the same way he spoke of the New England temperament, and suggested that the apparent coldness in it was also real, and that the suppression of emotion for generations would extinguish it at last." Psychologically speaking, the second remark might be taken as a sufficient explanation of the first. On the other hand, perhaps Hawthorne meant to say that no woman he had ever met in the flesh was quite as resplendent as his imagined dark lady.

**Her type is not unknown of course in Victorian fiction, from Trollope to Hardy. She also enters the folklore of the Anglo-Saxon countries as the villainous 'dark vampire' of the early American films and popular romances. It is interesting to note that in the 1920's the glamorous (the 'hot') blonde replaces the mysterious and voluptuous brunette as the carrier of the sexually potent and dangerous. In Anita Loos' *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* the usurpation has already gone so far that it is taken for granted. This reversal of roles may well be due to the newly-won sexual freedom of the post-war era, a freedom which brought the sexual element to the light of day and thus ended its hitherto exclusive identification with the secrets of the night.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter"; Zenobia, who is something of a litterateur and a crusader for women's rights,* has an aptitude for extreme ideas that fill her interlocutors with dismay; and Miriam evolves a conception of sin which amounts to a justification, for she takes the view that sin is a means of educating and improving the personality.

The dark lady is a rebel and an emancipator; but precisely for this reason Hawthorne feels the compulsion to destroy her. *He thus converts the principle of life, of experience, into a principle of death.* Incessantly haunted by the wrongs of the past, by the memory of such brutal deeds directly implicating the founders of his family as the witchcraft-trials and the oppression of the Quakers, this repentant puritan is nevertheless impelled by an irresistible inner need to reproduce the very same ancestral pattern in his work. Roused by long-forgotten fears and superstitions, he again traces the footprints of the devil and hears demonic laughter in the woods as darkness falls. His story of the dark lady renews, in all essentials, the persecution of the Salem witches. Beatrice is "as lovely as the dawn and gorgeous as the sunset," yet the "rich perfume of her breath blasts the very air" and to embrace her is to die. Passionate love becomes Zenobia best, yet through insinuating symbols she is pictured as a sorceress. She wears an exotic flower in her hair, and perhaps if this talismanic flower were snatched away she would "vanish or be transformed into something else." Miriam, too, has the "faculty of bewitching people." When her nerves give way and she fancies herself unseen, she seeks relief in "fits of madness horrible to behold." Such is the twice-told tale of the dark lady. The victim, in her earlier incarnations, of grim black-browed puritan magistrates, she is now searched out by a secluded New England author who condemns her because she coerces his imagination.

Her figure is first evoked by Hawthorne in *Rappaccini's Daughter* (1844), an entirely fantastic tale generally ranked among the most brilliantly effective of his earlier writings. Beatrice is the daughter of a malignant old professor, who, in his search of

*This is the basis of the widespread impression that she is modelled after Margaret Fuller. Henry James thought there was no truth in the legend. Hawthorne's references to the Boston sibyl in his notebooks are uniformly unkind; he describes her as devoid of the "charm of womanhood" and as a "great humbug" to boot.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fearsome secrets, is experimenting with the medicinal properties of poisonous plants. On coming to Padua, the student Giovanni rents a room the window of which overlooks Rappaccini's garden. Though unaware of the real nature of the flowers in this garden, he is at once troubled by their strange and rampant bloom.—"The aspect of one and all of them dissatisfied him; their gorgeousness seemed fierce, passionate, and even unnatural. There was hardly an individual shrub which a wanderer, straying by himself through a forest, would not have been startled to find growing wild, as if an unearthly face had glared at him out of the thicket." His initial impression of Beatrice is that she is but another flower—"the human sister of these vegetable ones, as beautiful as they, more beautiful than the richest of them, but still to be touched only with a glove, nor to be approached without a mask"; and when night closes in, he dreams of a rich flower and a lovely girl. "Flower and maiden were different and yet the same, and fraught with some peculiar peril in either shape." In time, as Giovanni ventures into the garden, he learns that the flowers are deadly. But he is now in love with Beatrice and tormented by the suspicion that she possesses the same fatal attributes. Can such dreadful peculiarities in her physical nature exist, he asks himself, without some corresponding "monstrosity of soul?" The day comes when after many tests he is at last sure that not only is she poisonous but that she had begun to instil her poison into his system. He procures an antidote which he forces her to drink. But it is too late to save her, for "so radically had her earthly part been wrought upon by Rappaccini's skill, that as poison had been her life, so the powerful antidote was death; and thus the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature . . . perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni."

No summary can give an adequate sense of the exotic light in which this story is drenched, nor of the extravagantly erotic associations of its imagery. It opens with the 'peephole' motif, so typical of Hawthorne. ("Sometimes through a peephole I have caught a glimpse of the real world . . ." he wrote to Longfellow.) At first it is only from the outside—through a window—that Giovanni dares to peer into this "Eden of poisonous flowers," which Freudians would have no trouble at all translating into a garden of genitalia. But whether interpreted in a Freudian manner or not, its mystery is easily unraveled. What is this Eden if not the garden

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of experience, of the knowledge of good and evil. Giovanni is tempted to enter it, only to discover that its gorgeous flowers are emblems of sin and that the gorgeous Beatrice embodies all that is forbidden. She has succeeded in enticing him into a "region of unspeakable horror," but it is she who is doomed, while he, being innocent, escapes. The wages of sin is death.

To be sure, there are other readings of this story. The traditional one simply takes at face value Hawthorne's stated intention, his 'message' warning against such unscrupulous love of power and knowledge as is manifested in Rappaccini. The old professor, who is a shadow character, is thus put in the foreground, while Beatrice, who is the real protagonist, is reduced to the role of a mere passive victim of her father's monomaniacal ambition. Needless to say, this approach ignores the story's specific content for the sake of its abstract and, it should be remarked, utterly commonplace moral. It fails to account for the mystic sensuality, the hallucinated atmosphere, and the intertwining symbolism of flower and maiden. No, this business of the wizard Rappaccini and his poisons is just so much flummery and Gothic sleight-of-hand. Its use is that of an "alibi" for the author, who transforms Beatrice into a monster in order to punish her for tempting Giovanni. Actually it is her beauty that Hawthorne cannot forgive her.

The flower-symbolism of this tale is repeated in the later romances of the dark lady. So resplendent is the scarlet token of shame worn by Hester Prynne that it might well be a flower in Rappaccini's garden formed to spell the letter A. ("On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, there appeared the letter A. It was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy. . . .") And, again, much is made in *The Blithedale Romance* of the single flower that adorns Zenobia's hair.—"It was a hot-house flower, an outlandish flower, a flower of the tropics, such as appeared to have sprung passionately from a soil the very weeds of which would be fervid and spicy . . . so brilliant, so rare, so costly. . . ." It is manifestly a flower of a preternatural order, a kind of *mana*-object, an instrument of magic and witches' work.

As compared to the subsequent full-length versions of the same theme, the story of Beatrice is but a primitive fantasy. There

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is a gap between *Rappaccini's Daughter* and *The Scarlet Letter,* which was written six years later and which is the most truly novelistic of Hawthorne's romances. Its concrete historical setting gives it greater density of material and sharpness of outline; and largely because of this gain in reality, Hester Prynne is the least symbolically overladen and distorted of the four heroines who share in the character of the dark lady. There is nothing satanic about her motives and she is the only one who, far from being ultimately spurned, is justified instead.

There are ambiguities in *The Scarlet Letter,* as in all of Hawthorne, yet it is possible to say that it represents his furthest advance in affirming the rights of the individual. Known as a story of the expiation of a sin, it is quite as much an analysis of this sin as a "kind of typical illusion." It is the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale, his brain reeling from ghostly visions, who in his repentance plies a bloody scourge on his own shoulders; Hester, on the other hand, is ready to reject the puritan morality altogether, to make a clean sweep of the past and to escape from the settlement in order to fulfill her love without shame or fear. Her pariah-status in the community is not productive of remorse and humility. On the contrary, we are told that "standing alone in the world . . . the world's law was no law for her mind. . . . In her lonesome cottage, by the seashore, thoughts visited her, such as dared enter no other dwelling in New England."

This is best shown in Chapters XVII and XVIII of the novel, when Hester finally persuades the minister that the only way he could rid himself of Chillingsworth's persecution is to desert his congregation and return to England. At first he thinks that she bids him go alone, whereupon he protests that he has not the strength or courage to embark on such a venture. At this point she reveals her plan, proving that she does not recognize her guilt, that for her nothing has changed, that in fact "the whole seven years of outlawry and ignominy had been little other than a preparation for this very hour."—But some of the passages that follow are worth quoting at length.

> He repeated the word.
> "Alone, Hester!"
> "Thou shalt not go alone!" answered she, in a deep whisper.
> Then all was spoken!
> Arthur Dimmesdale gazed into Hester's face with a look in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which hope and joy shone out, indeed, but with fear between them, and a kind of horror at her boldness, who had spoken what he vaguely hinted at but dared not speak.

But Hester Prynne, with a mind of native courage and activity, and for so long a period not merely estranged, but outlawed from society, had habituated herself to such latitude of speculation as was altogether foreign to the clergyman. . . . For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established. . . . The tendency of her fate has been to set her free.

"Thou wilt go," said Hester, calmly, as he met her glance.

The decision once made, a glow of strange enjoyment threw its flickering brightness over the trouble of his breast. It was the exhilarating effect—upon a prisoner just escaped from the dungeon of his own heart—of breathing the wild, free atmosphere of an unredeemed, unchristianized, lawless region. . . .

"Do I feel joy again?" cried he, wondering at himself. "Methinks the germ of it was dead in me! O, Hester, thou art my better angel! I seem to have flung myself—sick, sin-stained, and sorrow-blackened—down upon these forest-leaves, and to have risen up all made anew, and with new powers to glorify Him that hath been merciful! This is already the better life. Why did we not find it sooner?"

"Let us not look back," answered Hester Prynne. "The past is gone! . . . See! With this symbol I undo it all, and make it as it had never been!"

So speaking, she undid the clasp that fastened the scarlet letter, and taking it from her bosom, threw it to a distance among the withered leaves. . . . The stigma gone, Hester heaved a deep, long sigh, in which the burden of shame and anguish departed from her spirit. O exquisite relief! . . . By another impulse she took off the formal cap that confined her hair; and down it fell upon her shoulders, dark and rich. . . . There played around her mouth and beamed out of her eyes, a radiant and tender smile, that seemed gushing from the very heart of womanhood. A crimson flush was glowing on her cheeks, that had been long so pale. Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past, and clustered themselves, with her maiden hope and a happiness before unknown, within the magic circle of this hour.

This unregenerate temptress knows her power, but in the end Dimmesdale cheats her of her triumph by publicly confessing his sin on the scaffold; and that, of course, is *his* triumph. This thin-skinned clergyman is the ancestor of all those characters in Henry

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

James who invent excruciatingly subtle reasons for renouncing their heart's desire once they are on the verge of attaining it. But in James there are also other characters, who, while preserving Dimmesdale's complex qualities of conscience and sensibility, finally do succeed in overcoming this tendency to renunciation. Lambert Strether of *The Ambassadors* and Milly Theale of *The Wings of the Dove,* whose ideal aim is "to achieve a sense of having lived," are plainly cases of reaction against Hawthorne's plaint: "I have not lived but only dreamed of living!"

This link with James is further evidence that, though in no position to show his hand and not even fully conscious of what was at stake, Hawthorne dealt with the problem of sin mainly insofar as it served him as a mold for the problem of experience. It is difficult to believe in the sins committed by his characters for the simple reason that he hardly believes in them himself. Consider how he stacks the cards, how he continually brings up extenuating circumstances and even lapses into tell-tale defensive statements, so that before long we cannot but lose the conviction of evil and corruption. Who, actually, are his sinners? The minor figures cannot, of course, be taken into account in this respect, for, like Chillingsworth, Westervelt, Miriam's model and even Judge Pyncheon, they are nothing more than conventional villains, and at that most of them are so unreal that their conduct is of little consequence. It is only the protagonists, then, who count. But of these, with the exception of Dimmesdale, there is scarcely one who can be objectively regarded as a wrongdoer. Among the women only Hester's guilt is definitely established, yet even she is shown to have so many rights on her side that it is impossible to see in her anything more portentous than a violator of the communal *mores.* It is not, however, by their flouting of the communal *mores* that we judge the great transgressors pictured in literature. These big biters into the apple inevitably sin against the Holy Ghost.

Zenobia and Miriam wholly exemplify Hawthorne's bias against the dark lady, a bias which, instead of being supported and objectified by a credible presentation of her misdeeds, is limited in its expression to atmospheric effects, insinuations, and rumors. He wants to destroy the dark lady at the same time that he wants to glorify her; hence his indictment of her is never really

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

driven home. This divided intention cannot but impair the dramatic structures of *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun,* and these two narratives are in fact much inferior to *The Scarlet Letter.*

But the *Romance,* with its marvelous sense of place and weather and with its contrasted tableaux of town and country, has a unique appeal of its own. Both James and Lawrence have testified to its attraction. The former speaks of it as "leaving in the memory an impression analogous to that of an April day—an alternation of brightness and shadow, of broken sun-patches and sprinkling clouds." James also thought that in Zenobia Hawthorne made his nearest approach to the complete creation of a character. But this vivid brunette is treated with much less sympathy than Hester—and perhaps the reason is that since she exerts greater sexual power she must needs be subjected to firmer measures of control. At any rate, his attitude to her is markedly more subjective, and this note of subjectivity is one of the charms of the *Romance,* the unfailing charm of the confessional tone and of the personal modulation. The story is told through a narrator by the name of Miles Coverdale, a minor Boston poet in whom one easily discerns many features of the author.

No sooner does Coverdale come upon Zenobia in Blithedale—a Utopian colony inhabited by a "little army of saints and martyrs"—than her beauty moves him to rhapsodic appreciation; he is in a fever of susceptibility, and the very next day a fit of sickness lays him low. His illness and exhaustion render him even more sensitive—morbidly so—to what he calls "Zenobia's sphere." (What a master stroke, this episode of Coverdale's illness, with its suggestions of a rite of passage from one mode of life to another!) Obviously infatuated with her, he is not the man to submit to such a feeling. By what is plainly a psychological detour—analysts would see in it an example of protective displacement—he persuades himself that his real attachment is to Zenobia's half-sister, the mediumistic, shadowy snow-maiden who is the Prissy of the tale. This convenient self-deception permits him to covet Zenobia and to pry into her affairs without in any way committing himself to her—for how could he, a paleface poet with overcharged scruples, make up to a woman who is "passionate, luxurious, lacking simplicity, not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taste"? Moreover, as if to spare him further trouble, both females fall in love not with him but with the fanatical reformer Hollingsworth, who is a mere stick of a character, a travesty as a reformer and even a worse travesty as a lover. The emotional economy of this story is throughout one of displacement. It is evident on every page that the only genuine relationship is that of Coverdale to Zenobia; the rest is mystification. But the whole point of Coverdale's behavior is to avoid involvement. As Zenobia tells him in one of the final bang-up scenes, his real game is "to grope for human emotions in the dark corners of the heart"—strictly in the hearts of other people, to be sure. He plays perfectly the role of the ideal Paul Pry that Hawthorne envisaged for himself in the earlier passages of his journals.

Though vowing that he adores the ethereal Priscilla, Coverdale is nevertheless quite adept at belittling her by means of invidious comparisons that strike home despite their seemingly general reference. Some finicky people, he reflects after his first encounter with Zenobia, might consider her wanting in softness and delicacy, but the truth is that "we find enough of these attributes everywhere; preferable . . . was Zenobia's bloom, health, and vigor, which she possessed in such overflow that a man might well have fallen in love with her for their sake only." And again: "We seldom meet with women nowadays, and in this country, who impress us as being women at all;—their sex fades away and goes for nothing . . . a certain warm and rich characteristic seems to have been refined away out of the feminine system." Finally, in view of these frequent digs at Prissy, there can be no doubt that Westervelt, the villain of the piece, is really speaking for Coverdale when he describes her as "one of those delicate, young creatures, not uncommon in New England, and whom I suppose to have become what we find them by the gradual refining away of the physical system among your women. Some philosophers choose to glorify this habit of body by terming it spiritual; but in my opinion, it is rather the effect of unwholesome food, bad air, lack of outdoor exercise, and neglect of bathing, on the part of these damsels and their female progenitors, all resulting in a kind of hereditary dyspepsia. Zenobia, with her uncomfortable surplus of vitality, is far the better model of womanhood."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But this "better model of womanhood" commits suicide for want of love, while the obstreperous Hollingsworth is collared by Prissy and dragged to the altar. The puritan morality of predestination takes its toll as the story closes. Humanity is divided into the damned and the saved, irretrievably so, and never the twain shall meet. Yet the *Romance*, despite its mechanically enforced moral lessons, stands out among Hawthorne's works for its outspokenness and for its bold and free characterization of Coverdale and Zenobia. In its painful doubleness, in its feeling of combined attraction and repulsion, the relationship between these two characters is one of the most meaningful and seminal in American literature. It is intrinsically the relationship between New England and the world, and again the connection with James comes to mind. Zenobia can be understood as an earlier and cruder version of Madame de Vionnet (of *The Ambassadors*), whose worldly motives and passionate nature Lambert Strether finally comes to understand and to accept; and Coverdale, too, is reproduced in James, and not in one type alone. One recognizes his kinship with Strether, who has overcome the obsession with sin and is priming himself to enter forbidden territory, no less than with such a curious figure as the spying, eavesdropping protagonist of *The Sacred Fount*, whose neurotic fear and envy of life find an outlet in a mania of snooping and prying into the lives of his neighbors. In this nameless Jamesian snooper the 'peephole' motif reaches its culmination: it has become his medium of existence and his intellectual rationale besides.

In *The Marble Faun* Hawthorne resumes his story of the dark lady, and his attitude to her is now formulated in more logical terms. The conception of sin as an "instrument most effective in the education of intellect and soul" is openly expounded and affirmed by Miriam, whereas the snow-maiden Hilda, who is a purist and perfectionist, defends to the last the old puritan ethic. What Miriam advocates is the right of the personality to that self-knowledge and self-development which only the process of experience can provide. But she too, like Hester, is in the end sentenced by the author to life-long suffering and expiation of her sin. Unlike Hester's sin, however, Miriam's is utterly chimerical, fabricated out of the whole cloth by the Gothic machinery of horror; what alone is real is her defiance of the ancestral taboos.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The part of the male evildoer in *The Marble Faun* is taken by Donatello, the innocent, faun-like, quasi-mythical Italian who is drawn by Miriam to commit a crime and is this brought within the confines of "sinful, sorowful mentality." It is the story, of course, of the fall of man, with the dark lady cast in the dual role of Eve and the serpent. Hilda and the sculptor Kenyon are the onlookers and commentators on the action. Presented as models of virtue, they are actually an insufferable pair of prigs, especially Hilda, who is in fact one of the grimmest figures in Hawthorne, despite all the proper talk about her dove-like nature. Symbolically enough, this militant virgin dwells in a tower which is continually referred to as the "young girl's eyerie," and from this high vantage-point she surveys the conduct of mankind with the self-assurance of a moral millionaire. The sculptor, to be sure, tends to sympathize with Miriam, but Hilda never fails to pull him up short. The whole issue is summed up perfectly in the following dialogue between them:

> "Ah, Hilda," said Kenyon, "you do not know, for you could never learn it from your own heart, which is all purity and rectitude, what a mixture of good and evil there may be in things evil; and how the greatest criminal, if you look at his conduct from his own point of view, or from any side-point, may seem not so unquestionably guilty, after all. So with Miriam, so with Donatello. They are, perhaps, partners in what we must call awful guilt; and yet, I will own to you,—when I think of the original cause, the motives, the feelings, the sudden concurrence of circumstances thrusting them onward, the urgency of the moment, and the sublime unselfishness on either part,—I know not well how to distinguish it from much that the world calls heroism. Might we not render some such verdict as this?—'Worthy of Death, but not unworthy of Love!'"
>
> "Never!" answered Hilda, looking at the matter through the clear crystal medium of her own integrity. "This thing, as regards its causes, is all a mystery to me, and must remain so. But there is, I believe, only one right and only one wrong; and I do not understand, and may God keep me from understanding, how two things so totally unlike can be mistaken for one another; nor how two mortal foes, such as Right and Wrong surely are, can work together in the same deed. . . ."
>
> "Alas for human nature, then!" said Kenyon, sadly. . . . "I have always felt you, my dear friend, a terribly severe judge, and have been perplexed to conceive how such tender sympathy could coexist with the remorselessness of a steel blade. You need no mercy, and therefore know not how to show any."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> "That sounds like a bitter gibe," said Hilda, with the tears springing to her eyes. "But I cannot help it. It does not alter my perception of the truth. If there be any such dreadful mixture as you affirm—and which appears to me almost more shocking than pure evil,—then the good is turned to poison, not the evil to wholesomeness."

It is against such pharisaical moralism as Hilda displays that Hawthorne reacted in creating the figure of the dark lady, yet he could never muster the resolution to repudiate Hilda openly. Hence the dark lady, too, is inevitably stricken down by the same minatory code. Miriam pleads that the crime joining her to Donatello was "a blessing in disguise" in that it brought "a simple and imperfect nature to a point of feeling and intelligence which it could have reached under no other discipline." But her pleas are of no avail—in the end she is destroyed. And how illusory is the crime of which she is accused, with its horror-romanticism of the murder of a timeless wizard who has in some inexplicable way gained an ascendency over her. And this in what is presumably a serious novel of crime and punishment! One might claim, of course, that the failure of actuality at this crucial turn of the plot is nothing more than a defect in the story-teller's art, a carryover from the obsolescent Gothic technique. But it is precisely Hawthorne's persistent reliance on this technique which is so revealing of his real situation. It seems to me that he is unable to authenticate Miriam's guilt for the quite obvious reason that her beauty and love of life already sufficiently condemn her in his eyes. In other words, *it is not her deeds but her very existence which is the supreme provocation and the supreme crime.*

The critics of the school of 'original sin' have for some years now tried to present Hawthorne as a kind of puritan Dostoevsky. But this comparison will not stand the test of analysis. In their eagerness to make ideological capital out of Hawthorne's "traditionalism," these critics overlook one vital distinction: whereas in Dostoevsky's case the awareness of sin flows from a mighty effort to regain a metaphysical and religious consciousness, in Hawthorne this awareness is at the point of dissolution. What is behind it is no genuine moral passion nor a revival of dogma but a fear of life induced by narrow circumstances and morbid memories of the past. The faith of his forefathers had lost its rational appeal,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

yet psychologically it still ruled and confined him. Hence the inherited beliefs appear in his work as spectres rather than as convictions.

A literature of sin is most naturally developed in a society suffering from a surfeit of experience—an excess which it cannot control because of a derangement of values. This was the condition of Russian society in Dostoevsky's time; and it is this unlimited availability of experience, amounting almost to anarchy, which enabled the Russian novelist to materialize his themes of sin and evil. We believe in the sins of Stavrogin, Raskolnikov, and the Karamazovs because they are actualized within the experiential realm, the only realm in which significant actions can be truly confirmed. Now if regarded from this point of view, the American romancer must be placed at the opposite pole from the Russian novelist. The society to which he belonged suffered not from a surfeit but from poverty of experience; and, far from being too fluid, its values were altogether too rigid. His problem was simpler than Dostoevsky's as well as radically different in nature. It was not an exceptional but necessarily a typical problem—typical, despite all variations, of America's creative writers in the nineteenth century and in the early decades of the twentieth. It can be defined as the problem of the re-conquest, of the re-acquisition of experience in its cultural, esthetic, and, above all, subjective aspects. For this is the species of experience which had gradually been lost to the migrant European man in the process of subjugating and settling the new world.

Van Wyck Brooks has described Hawthorne as the "most deeply planted of American writers." But this is true only in the sense that he is the most deeply and vividly local. He rifled the hive of New England honey, but he was quite indifferent to the wider ranges of the national scene. His is the "sweet flavor," to use one of his own similies, of "a frost-bitten apple, such as one picks up under the tree in December." It is the chill yet mellow flavor of the Salem centuries. On this side of him he indeed sums up and closes the puritan cycle; but from another angle of vision he can be seen to be precursive of the later and more positive interests of American letters. Times past are mirrored in the dark lady's harsh fate, yet in her mystic sensuality she speaks of things to come.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Three Key West Poems

Elizabeth Bishop

JERONYMO'S HOUSE

My house, my fairy
palace, is
of perishable
clapboards with
three rooms in all,
my gray wasps' nest
of chewed-up paper
glued with spit.

My home, my love-nest,
is endowed
with a verandah
of wooden lace,
adorned with ferns
planted in sponges,
and the front room
with red and green

left-over Christmas
decorations
looped from the corners
to the middle
above my little
center table
of woven wicker
painted blue,

and four blue chairs
and an affair
for the smallest baby
with a tray
with ten big beads.
Then on the wall
two palm-leaf fans
and a calendar

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and on the table
one fried fish
spattered with burning
scarlet sauce,
a little dish
of hominy grits
and four pink tissue-
paper roses.

Also I have
hung on a hook
an old French horn
re-painted with
aluminum paint.
I play each year
in the parade
for José Marti.*

At night you'd think
my house abandoned.
Come closer. You
can see and hear
the writing-paper
lines of light
and the voices of
my radio

singing flamencos
in between
the lottery numbers.
When I move
I take these things
and no more, from
my shelter from
the hurricane.

*A Cuban patriot.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COOTCHIE

Cootchie, Miss Lula's servant, lies in marl,
black into white she went
below the surface of the coral-reef.
Her life was spent
in caring for Miss Lula, who is deaf,
eating her dinner off the kitchen sink
while Lula ate hers off the kitchen table.
The skies were egg-white for the funeral
and the faces sable.

Tonight the moonlight will alleviate
the melting of the pink wax roses
planted in tin cans filled with sand
placed in a line to mark Miss Lula's losses;
but who will shout and make her understand?
Searching the land and sea for someone else,
the light-house will discover Cootchie's grave
and dismiss all as trivial; the sea, desperate,
will proffer wave after wave.

SEA-SCAPE

This celestial sea-scape, with white herons got up as angels,
flying as high as they want and as far as they want sidewise
in tiers and tiers of immaculate reflections;
the whole region, from the highest heron
down to the weightless mangrove island
with bright green leaves edged neatly with bird-dropping
like illumination in silver,
down to the suggestively Gothic arches of the mangrove roots
and the beautiful pea-green back-pasture
where occasionally a fish jumps, like a wild-flower
in an ornamental spray of spray;
this cartoon by Raphael for a tapestry for a Pope:
it does look like Heaven.
But a skeletal lighthouse standing there
in black and white clerical dress,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who "lives on his nerves," thinks that he knows better.
He thinks that Hell rages below his iron feet,
that that is why the shallow water is so warm,
and he knows that Heaven is not like this.
Heaven is not like flying or swimming,
but has something to do with blackness and a strong glare
and when it gets dark he will remember something
strongly worded to say on the subject.

They Turned Her Back

Bharati Kumari Sarabhai

They turned her back from the rich man's door,
The big northern guardsmen of the frontier,
Insolent told her—the noble mansion
Had been robbed by a stone mason woman,
A hag with sore swollen eyes and a baby, who
Passed through that door three months ago
With a suspicious bundle of clothes on her head.

The beautiful, gracious lady ails inside,
Accidental hears of the villager's visit,
Sends for the attractive maid (she cannot
Be good, just look at her, the servants say)—
Quick to go, illuminate the old way
From the dark avenued portico fronts.

Between solicitous, slow feeding aunts
The rustic now sits on the ground quain tiled
With her first born, three year old buxom child.
—They are welcome, very welcome,
But how did they come?—
Oh they were posited in a bus two hours long,
They walked two miles and waited in the sun,
All through the morn and more than half the noon.

The buxom son, like a little barbarian
Has luminous eyes collyrium tinted,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sits bolt upright, small silver rings plated
At the end of long, bold, undusted leg;
His head close shaven, struck as with the plague
Or else sudden invaded, left barren,
A cotton field caught in a hurricane
Of locusts.

And now a plate of sweets
For him alone is spread,
Most delicious rounded
Like the chin on his hand.
First, he refuses, no,
He will take it home—so—
Gravely he cups his hands,
Fifty miles in the bus,
To father, he whispers . . .
At last prevailed upon
He eats without a spoon.

Everything sinks down like stone.
Large, serene eyes fixed on his plate,
He has the air of perfect manners,
Dipping the cup with one fourth fingers
And eating with mouth sometime shut
As our numerous westerners
May notice with relief. One aunt
So bland, now makes as if to shift,
Then looks away, decides she can't,
Besides she need not be silent—

—How well brought up, how different
From that woman of yesterday,
Husband-deserted, forcible-possessed,
Who so tragic there was standing,
Eyes half shut and quivering,
(It was put on, I now suspect),
With desolate, disconsolate aspect
And so it's whispered . . .
is infected?
Her lower lip hangs loose always

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Looks tired and two different shades—
The wretch!—
The lady of the house from her bed
Affectionate looks on. She is as a painted
Dream to the dreaming peasant,
A mythical being, an instant's
Apparition, a tale princess
In this late late age, both fair and virtuous.
She drinks with her eyes
And shy, how she shines as she says
She loves the lady,
Her great happiness just to see her lady,
How else can it be
In this world of great compartments
That one such as she
Should see a lady so good and beautiful?
Unenvious, unresentful,
Handsome and thin,
Long-armed like a queen
She sits on the naked floor,
While her son sups like a disinherited heir
In his true princely estate.

French Writers, Summer 1941

Victor Serge

ARAGON: decorated-tricolored-lyric-Stalinist-G.P.U. Henri BERAUD: proceeds sternly in *Gringoire:* "English, that patois born of Saxon and low Norman. . . ." Julien BENDA: hiding in "free" France (Jew). André BILLY: offers a shadow of resistance with *Figaro* (banned). BERNANOS: in Brazil, thunders at times over the radio. Henry BORDEAUX: continues to sing the praises of the marshall, etc. André BRETON: has crossed the Atlantic with two works banned by the censor. L. F. CELINE: in Paris, official anti-Semitism—best selling. Roland DORGELES: *Gringoire, Candide,* and all that. Blaise CENDRARS: in the south of France. Paul CLAUDEL: blesses the New Order with the Evangelist and the Apocalypse. Drieu LA ROCHELLE: is turning the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nouvelle Revue Française into the *Neue Französische Rundschau* (unsuccessfully). Georges DUHAMEL: in Paris, a banned novel. Léon-Paul FARGUE: Paris. Ramon FERNANDEZ: long live Doriot! André GIDE: true to himself in Cannes. Jean GIONO: published in both zones; is starting a venture for the production of moving pictures at Manosque. GIRAUDOUX: silence. Sacha GUITRY: in Paris, demonstrating that he is not a Jew. Bernard GRASSET: adapts himself to the occupation, collaborates, etc. R. MARTIN DU GARD: has come out against controlled literature. Marcel MARTINET: ill in the occupied zone. MONTHERLANT: has written an idiotic eulogy of the censorship in the *Temps*. Emmanuel MOUNIER (of *Esprit*): tries to maintain the personal while adapting himself. Jacques MESNIL (Botticelli): died on the road during the debacle at the age of 70. Paul MORAND: Vichy water. François MAURIAC: is saving his soul. MAUROIS: the United States. MALRAUX: in the south, faithful to Stalinism. Jean MALAQUAIS: in the south, we hope. Paul NIZAN (Stalinist): probably killed at the front. Benjamin PERET: in prison, then a proof-reader in Paris; now in the south. Edouard PEISSON: conformist, elected to the Marseilles Academy. Henry POULAILLE: Paris. Charles PLISNIER: converted to Catholicism, has published a novel in both zones. Georges PIOCH: dramatic critic of *L'Oeuvre*, Paris. Jules ROMAINS: the United States, the Daladier Mystery, the Romains Mystery. Romain ROLLAND: ?. SAINT-EXUPERY: on a mission connected with the French Embassy at Washington. Victor SERGE (Russian): has crossed the Atlantic. André SEVRY: publishing *Côte des Esclaves* in Paris. Boris SOUVARINE: in the south. J. G. TRICOT (*Les Harmonies de la Grèce*): civilian, killed on the Loire at the age of 35. Tristan TZARA: hopes for a visa. VALERY: nothing. Léon WERTH (Jew): accumulates manuscripts — silence. George BATAILLE (surrealism, revolution, Nietzche): librarian in Paris. Philippe HENRIOT (Gringoire): "Let us prohibit divorce!" (Michel Henriot, his nephew, killed his wife five years ago in some sordid affair of money and sadism.) Louis PIERARD: Belgian socialism at the service of the marshall. Léon PIERRE-QUINT: Jew, is silent in the "free" zone. Paul RIVET (Museum of Man): refugee in Bogota. Jacques SOUSTELLE (Museum of Man): Mexico—Free France. J. P. SAMPSON: in Zurich, translating Goethe and Silone. Philippe SOUPAULT (former surrealist): dismissed censor in Tunis. Paul-Emile VICTOR (*Boreal . . .*): entrusted with the education of the young in Martinique. P. J. JOUVE: in Algeria, editing *Fontaine*, a strictly lyrical review. André ROUSSEAUX: literature in *Figaro* (banned) in the "free" zone; objections to regimented thought. A. PETITJEAN: star of the one time *Nouvelle Revue Française*, one hand torn from his brow; very much French rebirth. Jean GUEHENNO: national revolution, but with a republican soul, n'est-ce pas? Luc DURTAIN: national revolution, of course, but with a soul and so forth. . . .

(*Translated from the French by Jean Connolly*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Facts of Life

Paul Goodman

CHILDISH RONNIE MORRIS has a wife Martha and a daughter Marcia, aged 9.

Ronnie is middle-aged, as we say of any one ten years older than ourselves, and he has invented a wonderful scheme to milk money from those who make $20,000 a year: he sells them Fine Editions with odd associations, as *The Golden Ass* bound in donkey's hide or *The New Testament* signed by the designer in the blood of a lamb. (He is childish enough to go thru with such a profitable idea, instead of dismissing it like the rest of us fools.) He has a two-masted sailboat; he moves in the circle of his clients. In a business way, he knows Picasso and Thomas Benton, and is the expert at the Club in the trade-secrets of the Muses. In the acts of love, he is medium; he went to Dartmouth; but in fact he is only moderately fixated on the period when he was 5th oar, for he had had an even prior period of ease and lust, which has saved him for philosophy and the arts, rather than the brokerage.

Martha Morris is an Andalusian type. When she arranges flowers she keeps them under control with wires. She drives at high speeds. Her relations with Ronnie are as usual; she is her little daughter's friend, and every Xmas she and Marcia design a gift-volume for Ronnie's clientèle. She is more political than her husband and her position is slightly to the left of the right wing of the left-center: a group that finds no representation in Washington, but used to have thirty seats in Paris. I could write forever, as it would seem, about Martha's teeth as they flash under her nose. Aren't the rhythms delightful, of the description of the upper middle class?

Now little Marcia goes to the University Progressive School where many of her schoolmates have fathers in the embassies, but Marcia too has been to the Near East in search of that lamb. At

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

school they are taught to express themselves freely. Little Marcia, when she does so—she takes after her mother—is delightful!

Marcia has a fight in school today with one of the little gentlemen her contemporaries. He breaks her photographic plate. The fight is about the nature of chickens' eggs. She stamps on his foot. Being a girl, she still has an advantage in mental age and more words to say; she says a sentence in French. He can't punch her in the nose because it is ungentlemanly. He is inhibited from drawing on his best knowledge because it is dirty; but worse, it is gloomily indistinct, and even on these matters she seems to have more definite information, is about to mention it.

"Shut up!" he argues, "shut up! you're just an old-time Jew."

This perplexing observation, of which she understands neither head nor tail, brings her to a momentary pause; for up to now, at least with Harry—tho certainly not with Terry or Larry—she has maintained a queenly advantage. But he has brought her to a pause by drawing on absolutely new information.

Now she does a reckless thing: she dismisses his remark from her mind and launches into a tirade which devastatingly combines contempt and the ability to form complete sentences, till Harry goes away in order not to cry. A reckless, a dangerous thing: because what we thus dismiss enters the regions of anxiety, of loss and unfulfilled desire, and there makes strange friends. This is the prologue to fanatic interests and to falling in love. How new and otherwise real is this observation on its next appearance!

Marcia calls her mother sometimes Momsy and sometimes Martha.

"What did Harry mean," she asks her, "when he called me an old-time shoe?"

"Jew?"

"Yes, he stated I was just an old-time Joo."

Across the woman's face passes, for ever so many reasons, the least perceptible tightening. "Oh oh!" feels Marcia along her ears and scalp; and now she is confirmed and doubly confirmed in the suspicions she did not know she had. When she now has to express herself with colored chalks, new and curious objects will swim into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the foreground alongside the pool, the clock will become a grandfather's clock, and all be painted Prussian blue, even tho Miss Coyle is trying to cajole especially the little girls into using warm bright colors, because that is their natural bent.

"Well he was right, you are a Jewess," says Martha. "It's nothing to be ashamed of."

"Said Joo, not Juice."

"A Jew is a boy; a Jewess is a girl."

"Oh! there are 2 kinds!"

It's worse and worse. She never dreamed that Harry was up on anything, but perhaps even his veiled hints conceal something. She feels, it seems inescapable to her, that boys have a power, surely not obvious in school,—And the grown-ups even take it for granted! She sees it every day, that these same boys when they become men are superior to the women. Yet men's clothes don't *express* anything, and actresses are better than actors. But just this *contradiction* confirms it all the more, for the explanations of contradictions are in the indistinct region,—and everything there is mutually involved. Marcia is already working on a system of the mysteries. Especially when Momsy now tries to tell her some reasonable anecdote about Jewesses and Jews, just like a previous astringent account of the chickens and the flowers.

Martha never happens to have told little Marcia that they are all Jews.

"Is Ronnie a Joo?"

"Of course."

"Are Louis and Bernie Joos?"

"Louis is a Jew but Bernie is a Gentile."

It's a lie, thinks Marcia; they are both the same. (She means they are both effeminate.) Why is Martha lying to her?

"What is ser-cum-si-zhun?" asks Marcia, calling the lie.

This inquisition has now become intolerable to Martha. "Good night, Marcia," she explains.

"Is Rosina a Juice?" Marcia cries, asking about Ronnie's mistress.

"Marcia! I said good night!"

"Tell me! tell me! is Rosina Juice?"

"No."

"Ah!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why Ah!?"

"Good night, Momsy," says Marcia, kissing her.

Since the habits are formed speediest where necessity constrains and yet conscious and deliberate adjustment is embarrassing or tedious, Martha has speedily and long ago learned the few adjustments belonging particularly to Jews of a certain class of money. The other hotel; not on this list; the right to more chic and modernity, but please no associations with Betsy Ross in tableaux or on committees. Of course habits learned by this mechanism are subject to amazing breaches, when submerged desire suddenly asserts itself and the son of Jacob becomes Belmont or Ronnie becomes, as he is, an honorary colonel in the militia. But on the whole, where money is so exchangeable, there are very few special adjustments; for instance, they never even came to Marcia's keen perception, especially since none of the Jews whom she is so often with without knowing it, do not mention them. Of course, on the other hand, in the more critical social episodes, such as marriage—but forget that. And there are many other meanings, archaically forgotten.

"Since you have to put up with the handicap whether you like it or not," decides Mrs. Ronnie Morris, "why not make an advantage of it, and be proud of it?" And at once she writes out a check for a subscription to *The Menorah Journal*, the *Harper's Monthly* of reformed Jews.

"Never heard such a stupid argument in my life!" says Ronnie. He is very angry, like any one who has played the game like a perfect gentleman and then finds that the other side goes too far and calls his daughter an old-time Jew. "What's the use of *pretending* you're a Jew, when you're *not* a Jew?" he shouts.

"We are Jews. Don't shout," says Martha.

"I'll go to school and punch that brat's nose."

Martha says nothing.

"Do I pay $300 a year for him to tell Marcia that she's a Jew?"

"But we are Jews," says Martha, with a new loyalty.

"Since when?" says Ronnie scientifically. "To be a Jew means one of three things: It means first to belong to a certain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Race; but there isn't any Jewish race in anthropology. Look at me, do I look like a Jewish race?"

He looks like a highly brushed and polished moujik.

"No. Secondly: it means a Nationality. But even if some Jews think they have a nationality, do I? I went to Jerusalem to pick out a Gentile lamb. Anyway, I can't speak the language. Hebrew isn't the same as Yiddish, you know, even tho it looks the same; but I can't speak that either.

"Third: it's a Religion. So you see," he concludes triumphantly, "it's not a matter of not *wanting* to be a Jew or trying to *hide* that you're a Jew, but you *can't* be a Jew if you're *not* a Jew!"

"Don't be a fool," says Marcia. "A person's a Jew if his grandparents were Jews; even one's enough sometimes, depending."

"What sense does that make?"

"Do you think it's by accident," says Martha flatly, "that your mama and papa came to marry Jews and we married Jews?"

She means, thinks Ronnie, when our desire is toward Gentiles, toward retroussé noses and moon-face Hungarians. Does she mean Rosina? She means Bernie. We mean—but there is no time to think of that.

"I'll ask Louis," says Ronnie; for tho he holds sway at the luncheon club, all his ideas come from this poet.

"He's taking Marshy to the Picassos tomorrow."

"Let him tell her, then."

"What! are going to let your daughter find out the facts from a stranger?"

Having slept over it all night, by morning the little girl has contrived the following working theory:

In the beginning, of course, all babies are alike. Her deep-seated conviction on this point has never been in the least shaken by Momsy's anecdotes about the chickens, for it is plain to observe that all babies are alike. (Nor is this the chief reason for her conviction.) But then comes the moment when the thing is cut off the girls. When this takes place, is not yet clear; but it is planned from the beginning, because you can tell by the names; altho sometimes even there is a change of names; with some names you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

still can't tell; and others are easy to change, like Robert and Roberta or Bernie and Bernice. All of this is an old story to Marcia.

But now, there are some *chosen* ones, who are supposed to be cut but somehow they get off. Why? They are only *partly* cut—and this is ser-cum-si-zhun, because they use a scissors. These are Joos. For a moment, starting from "Louis," Marcia thinks that she can tell by the names, but then when she thinks of "Ronnie" and of "Terry" and "Larry," two boys in school whom she now knows are Joos (in fact, Terry is and Larry is not), she sees that she can't. The *last* names are connected with marrying and have nothing to do with ser-cum-si-zhun.

Now, she sees in a flash, it is *better* to be a Joo, for then you still have the secret power and the thing, but at the same time you can be cleverer like a girl. This is why Larry and Terry are always able to beat her, they have an unfair advantage; but Harry, the dope, is only a boy and not a Joo.

There are also differences among Joos; for instance, Louis is much smarter than Papa. But this *proves* it, for Louis is more like Martha; that is, they cut the *best* amount off him, but not so much from Papa. Anyway, she hates Louis and loves her poor papa. And now an enormous love for poor Harry suffuses her and she begins to tremble and want to go to school; he has so much secret power.

But more important—and, lying in bed, Marcia begins to tremble as she thinks about herself—what is a Juice? and besides all these, there are Gen-tiles. Martha and Marcia are Juice and Bernie is a Gen-tile. Oh! what a mean thing to say about poor Bernie, that he is not even a Juice, but even worse than a girl; he is not even clever. It is nice of Louis to be so kind to him. So it seems that things go in the following order: Boys, Joos, Juices, Girls, Gen-tiles. Except that it is smartest to be a Joo. But what is it! What is it that they did to Marcia to be a Juice? As she lets her fingers move between her thighs, she breaks into a cold sweat, and an urgency of longing loosens her strength. With a violent dismissal, she leaps from bed.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But while she is eating breakfast, an awful emptiness for her boy Harry spreads within her, and she bursts into tears.

Louis, who is quite intelligent, often cannot resist being cruel and supercilious to Ronnie, so that Ronnie feels like punching him in the nose—but then suddenly, at a poignant touch, even suggested by his own monologue, he relapses into natural melancholia. "To me of course," says he suavely to Ronnie, "your Jewish problem doesn't exist. My paternal parent 12th removed was Joseph Karo, the author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, or *Table* of the observances; he had established the lineage back to Joseph son of Eli, so that obviously, if we may lend any credence to the Gentile gospels, we go back to David the son of Jesse and further; but you're a Russian Jew. On my mother's side, I am related to the convert Leo the Hebrew; but that blood thruout is tainted by conversions; my three cousins, Georges de Duchesse, Georges Catala, and Georges Catala-de Duchesse were all converts of Maritain. My cousin Georges Catala-de Duchesse is the Abbot of St. Germain des Prés, an *idol*-worshipper, as I told him last summer. It ought to be clear by now, I said, that only Maimonides conceived the relation of God and Man in a way helpful and necessary to the Modern Age. This is my faith. 'If every Jew would read the *Mishneh Torah*, he would become a perfect snob,' cries Louis Parigi with pride, 'and would set tradition against tradition and not take the insults lying down or by appealing merely to good sense!' Besides, in our poetry both the Parigis and the de Duchesses look for inspiration to the Prophets. My cousin Georges de Duchesse, on the very eve of his baptism wrote his rime royal *Habakuk;* but 'Habakuk,' as Voltaire says, 'était capable de tout!' But even in writing my *Anacreontics* I have drawn on the dipsomaniac rhythms of your Chassidim. And by the way, my cousin Georges Catala was married to an 8th remove descendant of the Vilna Gaon, and her suicide was the cause of his conversion, which goes to show what comes of marrying with the Ashkenazim. (Are you also related to the Vilna Gaon, like all the other Lithuanians?) On the National issue, I am like Judah ha-Levi an allegorical Zionist; but the vulgar desire of a temporal habitation—this destroys, as I see it, just our sacred distinction from the *Goyim*"—(he pronounces *Go-yeem* as if he had stepped from a Christian fastness in Aragon

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

where never a Moor or Jew had once set foot);—"but God said—but *God* said," says Louis, raising a forefinger, "Make *Succoth*, Booths." At this quotation, suddenly, tears glisten in his eyes and he sinks into the deepest gloom. "Besides," he finishes airily, "except the purity of our Jewish morals, what defense do I have against adultery and sodomy?"

It is especially this breezy ending that makes Ronnie punch him in the nose—almost; yet this happens to be his only heart-felt remark, tho in the form of a wish.

In the afternoon, in front of the impassive checkerboard of *The Three Musicians*, the little girl again bursts into tears. Louis, who has with some skill been pointing out to her only such features of the difficult paintings as she is adequate to, an underfed and melancholy face, a marvelous mother bathed in rose, the fact that in 1920 the colors are no longer blended, and enveloping it all in fanciful anecdotes—he looks at her in stupefaction.

"It's not fair! It's not fair!" she sobs.

They are alone in the room.

"What's not fair?" says Louis.

"It's not fair 'cause it's a myst'ry, and I won't *ever* be able to understand it."

"Why you've been understanding it very well, Marcia. What you said about the colors I didn't know myself, because you're a painter and I'm not."

"You're *lying* to me—'cause it's a secret myst'ry, and I won't ever be able to understand it 'cause I'm only a girl, even if I'm a Juice."

? ?

"I understand about the colors and the poor boy, but I can't understand it *all*, 'cause they cut my thing off when I was little and Picass' is a man— An' I have nothing left but to be an actress."

He takes her hand, for the tears are rolling down her cheeks.

"—I won't ever be able to make 'em any more with a myst'ry if I live to be a million years old."

She hides her face in her other arm, and she cries with the pent-up anxiety of her 3rd to her 9th years.

A guard comes in and hastily goes out the other door.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On the walls, the impassive objects, which are indeed a secret mystery, stare from side to side.

The tears glisten in Louis's eyes. "This Holy Spirit," he says —he thinks he says—"is given to us and not made by us. It's not my fault if I cannot any more."

"Ah," she says, (he thinks), "maybe if it weren't for the Bernies and the Jackies, the prophetic voice of the Lord of Hosts would not prove so disheartened at the 3rd and 4th verse."

"What a despicable argument!" he cries (he thinks), "if I'm finally tired of that boy, why don't I think so right off and not need these thin arguments to bolster up my courage? Stop staring, you," says he to the unblinking middle Musician, "or I'll punch you in the nose."

"Look Marshy," he says reasonably to the little girl whose hand he is holding tight, "you can't expect to make these things right off! You have to develop your power. Just as when you learn to play the piano, you see you have to begin with finger-exercises."

"Oh!" she cries in fright and pulls her hand away. "How could he tell so quick?" she thinks in terror; "Momsy couldn't tell."

"See, this one is easy to understand," he says, pointing to those Three Musicians. "You see, this is an oboe."

"What's a Obo?"

"An oboe is a kind of wooden instrument with stops. This part is what the oboe looks like from underneath, which you can't ordinarily see. This is a guitar; he broke it into two pieces in order to make the pattern here with this red business.—"

"Can you, Louis?" she seizes his hand, "I mean can you? Can you develop your power by finger-exercises?"

? ?

"Can you? Can you?"

"Certainly. Every day you'll be able to paint a little better."

"Hurrah!"

Two women come in, tittering at a pyramidal creature that is like one of the works of the Six Days.

But the silence is twangling with the music of the guitars of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Picasso, with the guitars of Catalonia, with the cubist harmony by which the acrobats drift away.

In the school-field, the 4th year boys, in maroon sweat-suits, are playing the in-tra-mur-al ball-game, while Mr. Donlin is umpiring and keeping order. From time to time some of the little boys have the minds completely on the game. When his side is at bat, Harry is sitting on the lowest bench of the stands and Marcia bounces pebbles on him from above. Outside the iron fence around the field, Timmy and Page McCroskey, who go to Holy Name Academy, are staring at the clean and distinguished boys within. Mr. Donlin looks like a perfect fool, full of manly baby-talk such as, "Gooood try!" or "C'mon *Terry*, let's see what you can do!" Sometimes he loses his temper. One of the boys takes off his clothes and to the amazement of the Irish boys discloses his delicate limbs in another maroon uniform of shorts and a shirt with a big U. Amid a loud chorus, Mr. Donlin has to assert his authority to keep the children from exposing themselves to the cold air.

"Mr. Donlin, Mr. Donlin," mimic the two outside the bars, "kin I take off my drawers?"

A local merchant-prince, a great contributor to the University, has the exclusive franchise for the manufacture and sale of these many uniforms. Timmy and Page and their friends call the U-school the Jew-school. They are envious of the boundless wealth behind the bars and of the fact that the girls and boys go to school together. "Why doncha let the girls play with youse?" shouts little Timmy. Page, who is a year younger and much bolder, cries, "Mr. Donlin, kin I take off my drawers and show the girls my p——?"

On the large field, which is used for the high-school games, the baseball, thrown by weak arms and tapped by little bats, makes ridiculous little hops and arcs. Terry, distracted by the remark from the fence, drops a little pop-fly and the runners stream across the plate. Mr. Donlin advances to the fence shouting without profanity, go away or he'll punch them in the nose. From a little distance, they shout in chorus: "Jew School Jew School!" and some of the little scholars, who at other times announce proudly that they go to the University P'rgressive School (as if they went to college), now turn pink. "Play ball!" shouts Mr. Donlin in a manly voice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now all the little feelings are afire.

Marcia and Harry, however, have heard nothing; but they have now progressed from the first stage of touching-yet-not-touching by throwing things at each other, to the next stage of punching and pulling shoe-laces.

To the Irish boys, so systematically kept in order by their father and by the priest and Brothers to whom even their father defers, there is no way of doubting that non-Catholics enjoy a full sexual freedom. They *know*, in fact, that the Reformation began with fornication; and even more enviable are the Jews, as is proved by the anti-semitism, otherwise incomprehensible, that forms so large a part of the instruction by the Brothers. And along with this yearning, they observe this wealth and beauty and privilege thru the bars; and so is consolidated that deep sentiment of inferiority which will tomorrow need firearms to soothe.

To the little rich boys, on the other hand, it is obvious that freedom lies outside the bars among those wild boys whose dirty language makes them tremble with terror and stirs unconquerable lust in each one when he is alone; who can stay out late and wear hats decorated with paper-clips, and beg for pennies from strangers. So even before the first clash, the rich boys feel physically and morally powerless and would like to be the slaves of the poor ones, and it will require all the machinery of the state to treat them with an iron hand.

But why should I make the case any simpler than is necessary? For Timmy also hates little Page, just as he hates the Brothers in school; and among the U-boys there are the families going up and the families falling down, and the case, for instance, of weedy Tom, whose parents are slipping and climbing at the same time, and who will tomorrow be satisfied and avenged by burning for the lowest hustler, if his name happens to be Woodrow, until with a sinking heart he one day learns that Woodrow isn't a family name, but a war-name, after President Wilson.

Fascinated, Timmy is watching Marcia wrestling with Harry and pulling his hair, while he is trying to concentrate on his teammate at bat: "Make it be a good one! Make it be a good one!" he cries; and then he suddenly chases Marcia up the stands. Pressed between the bars till he is white, Timmy follows them with his stare, above him, thru the stands. But she jumps down and runs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

across the field toward the building, and then they both disappear. Poor Timmy stares at the gray door which has just closed.—So in each heart are fixed the types of love, after the girls who seem to be easy, who have the reputation of being available, who are easy and available in idea tho never in fact. The Jewish girls to the Irish boys like Timmy, and the Irish girls to the Jewish boys like Ronnie, and the sailors to Louis. But for the most part, it is just one's own kind that is really available (and really desirable, and absolutely forbidden!), and that we live with in the end, as Ronnie with Martha, and Louis with Bernie; these are no doubt still deeper types of love, tho far too deep to give us any pleasure.

"Knock Knock!" cries Page McCroskey.

"Play Ball!" shouts Mr. Donlin.

"Knock Knock, Mr. Donlin, Knock Knock!" he screams.

"Don't pay any attention, play ball," says Mr. Donlin.

"Who's there?" answers Larry.

"Cohen!"

"Don't pay any attention!" cries Mr. Donlin.

"Cohen who?" answers a voice.

"Who said it?" shouts Mr. Donlin authoritatively.

"Cohen f—— yourself!" cry Page and Timmy together.

One of the boys throws a stone at them.

"You c—— s——!" says Timmy, casting his eyes about for some resource.

"Shut up, McCroskey," says Terry, "or I'll tell somethin' on you, but I don't want to make you shamed."

"Do you believe that pile o' s—— that O'Hara said?" says Timmy wildly.

"Naw, I *saw* it!" says Terry.

"What did O'Hara say?" says Page.

But at this instant a foul-ball jumps out over the fence.

"H'yaann! H'yaann!" sing Page and Timmy and run down the block with the ball, grasping off their hats.

"Where's Harry Riesling? He's supposed to be coaching on first," says the beaten Mr. Donlin.

But Marcia and Harry are in one of the empty rooms where they have never been before (it is part of the High School), and she is telling him all about Picass'. He explains to her that he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

likes Terry and Larry swell, but he hates his big brother; but he promises just not to notice him any more. "He probably hates your papa as much as you hate *him*," Marcia observes judiciously, "so that's something you know on *him*." This insight, this knowledge, casts such an angel light on Harry's usually puzzled countenance that Marcia turns and stares at him. He explains to her that he likes geography and history, but Miss Jensen doesn't make it interesting the way Mr. Bee used to, and that's why he's not smart; and when Marcia tells him that she was in Egypt and the Near—East (as opposed to the Far—East), he is struck with admiration. But how different now is this admiration and his pleasure and pride in her ability to form complete sentences, as if she were a teacher whom he can kiss and lick and not even have to discuss certain things with, from the animosity he felt yesterday when she was so god-damned smart. She draws on the blackboard the dolphins playing at the *Ile de France's* prow.

"There are geniuses in every race," says Ronnie passionately, with all the energy of his desire for Rosina; "but both per capita and absolutely there are more of them among the Jews."

"I thought you said there was no Jewish race?"

"That's what I thought, but facts are facts and you can't get around it. Einstein Ehrlich Freud."

"Yes, the Jews are always going in for syphilis or psychoanalysis or the 4th dimension," says Martha.

"Picasso—"

"Ha, the same thing!"

"Proust—"

"There you have it!" says Martha triumphantly. "I'm not saying the Jews are not geniuses, but they're *queer*, they're just queer, that's all."

"What about Dali? He's not a Jew."

"Will you please tell me what you're trying to prove by that? I thought you were trying to prove that all the Jews, including yourself, were geniuses."

"No, but you said that Proust and Picasso were Jews."

"*I* said it? *I* said it?"

"I didn't say you said it especially; they *are* Jews, *half*-Jews."

"Oh don't be a fool."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ronnie says nothing.

"And let me tell you another thing," says Martha, "you Jews are not doing yourselves any favor by putting yourselves forward so much. If Felix Frankfurter is so smart as he's supposed to be, he knows that especially just now there's no place for another Jew on the Supreme Court bench. Every Jew that gets on the Supreme Court makes it just so much harder for us and Marcia. Where do you think I'm going to be able to send her to college?"

"That's a fine way of looking at it!" cries Ronnie. "It's true enough," he thinks; but Martha has always been ahead of him on national and international affairs.

"You're a Jew, so all right!" says Mrs. Ronnie Morris née de Havilland. "It's nothing to be ashamed of. But why bring it up in public? Who asks you?"

"Who?" says Ronnie bewildered.

"But trust a Jew to put himself forward as if he were something peculiar! If it weren't for the Jews there wouldn't be any anti-semitism."

"Who?" asks Ronnie.

CONTRIBUTORS

W. R. RODGERS is a young poet who lives in County Armagh, Northern Ireland. . . . ELIZABETH BISHOP, a frequent contributor to *Partisan Review*, lives in Key West, Florida. . . . BHARATI KUMARI SARABHAI is an Indian poetess whose work we believe is not familiar to American readers. She writes in English. . . . VICTOR SERGE is a poet, novelist, historian and political writer. Several years ago we printed excerpts from his novel, *Ville Conquise*. He published a novel on life in Moscow under Stalin, *S'il Est Minuit Dans le Siècle*, and a short life of Stalin in Paris a few months before the Germans came. He is now on this side of the Atlantic. . . . PAUL GOODMAN lives in New York City. The Colt Press in San Francisco is bringing out a novel by him this winter. . . . MARCEAU PIVERT, leader of the leftwing French Socialist group, le Parti Socialiste Ouvrier et Paysan ("P.S.O.P."), is an exile in Latin America. . . . MORTON G. WHITE's study of the development of John Dewey's theory of inquiry will appear in book form next Spring.

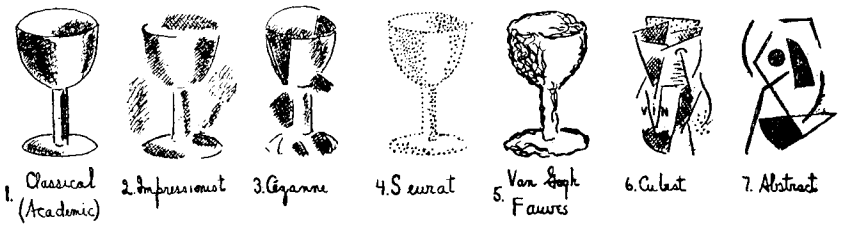
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

On the Mechanics of Abstract Painting

George L. K. Morris

1.

THE HISTORICAL SEQUENCES at the end of which painting reached abstraction can be concisely summarized in a chart such as the following, which shows how artists at various stages would have rendered a particular object, in this case a wine-glass:



Only the typical approaches are indicated as the diagram* in no way pretends to be inclusive.

The first (classical) rendition demonstrates the general manner in which a painter would have simulated a natural object during the Renaissance, and, through Ingres, into the more recent academic tradition. It is a serviceable method for turning form by modelling with such lights and shadows as describe the shapes sculpturally. For several centuries it served the expressive ends of western painting through many ramifications until banality became the inevitable result. The second (impressionist) method softened or discarded the contours in favor of light-effects *over* the forms, while sculptural weight was supplanted by a sort of tinted haze. Cézanne's method (number 3) is severely handicapped in such a rendition deprived of color; it initiated a fresh structural impulse and sought to bring solidity into impressionism by breaking the

*For the idea of this chart I am indebted to the French painter Robert Delaunay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

objects into planes where tone, weight, and color should absorb each other indeterminately, with contours added as a sort of visual reinforcement. Seurat combined the classical and impressionist approaches; atmospheric effects were stippled in with dots of color that tend to fuse when seen from a distance. Through this laborious method he endowed his forms with the sculptural qualities of figure 1 coupled with the illusion of being viewed through atmosphere (the cardinal characteristic of figure 2). Van Gogh handled impressionism impetuously, and through violent color-contrasts and swirling lines raised an emotional excitement that for him replaced sculptural solidity and led on to the fauves and expressionists. The cubists, reacting from this new impetus they originally had followed, returned to the austerity of Cézanne's surfaces of broken yet ordered planes. They broke the object more and more for added movement until the design began to flatten and spread the object in shallow sections over the picture surface. The way is now open for our last diagram, the abstract, which retains no perceptible trace of the wine-glass at all; only a few rhythms remain, fused with new forms dictated by the artist's sensibility. The painter has become free to broaden his design and to juxtapose the shapes according to the dictates of his esthetic requirements.

Perhaps the most noticeable change between the first and last figures charted above is the progression from an illustrative or "external" emphasis to one which is esthetic or "internal." So essential is an understanding of these opposing properties that I feel a brief analysis to be in order; and I shall include examples which, conceived in the interest of clarity, may sometimes appear unduly elementary.

The subject may be well summarized by a comparison of two famous examples of nineteenth century still-life painting, one entitled *Symbols of Justice* by Daumier and the other *Still-Life with Oranges* by Cézanne. The choice of titles is significant and the choice of objects even more so. Daumier selected a lawyer's hat, a quill-pen and inkwell, an open book. Cézanne depicted a bowl and some oranges; he often used oranges because, in his own phrase, an orange was "quieter" than a face. (Kandinsky was to remark a generation later that he was using circles because a circle was "quieter" than an orange.) Daumier's objects are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

painted skillfully enough and the composition is sufficiently balanced to hold them steady. The interest, however, is primarily centered in the objects themselves, or rather in the associations which the objects conjure up. As we reflect upon these "symbols of justice" we picture the wizened hand that has just laid down the pen, the dusty wig that the hat habitually adorns, the crimes inscribed in the dilapidated volume. Such emotions are those which we call external or "literary,"—that is, they are derived from associations projected from outside the canvas limits. (For one who knows nothing of nineteenth century law-courts the picture would perhaps have little interest.) This order of emotion was typical of Daumier's time and to a painter of Cézanne's sensibilities it seemed a noisy straining after something thoroughly localized and ephemeral. The *Still-Life with Oranges,* on the other hand, in no way depends upon pictorial associations,—in fact it goes out of its way to exclude them. The rendering suggests such awkwardness to the casual glance that any fruit-distributor would hesitate to use these oranges for advertising his wares. Cézanne must either be very clumsy or impelled by some different motive from Daumier's. Prolonged contemplation will disclose the true qualities; every orange—every shape, in fact,—is placed with such consummate care in relation to every other shape, that there is no confusion when two contours meet; the composition, although full of dramatic contrasts, is thus pacified into a completely ordered quietness. Even the individual brush-strokes are turned in a manner suggestive of no transient "stylishness" but to enhance the ponderous monumentality. In such paintings of Cézanne an emotional sincerity returned to art comparable to that of the Christian primitives which were also very quiet. If we were to glance once more at the Daumier the objects would by comparison appear smudged and paper-thin; when we have run through the literary associations, there is little else to hold the interest.

2.

The general historical pattern toward abstraction* has been traced. Most of the painters who now paint abstractly could pre-

*The word "abstract" has from the beginning proved a source of confusion. It continues to be employed despite efforts at substitution (non-representational, concretionist, non-objective) merely because the public has come to associate the term with pictures that do not represent nature.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sent a similar progression within the limits of their own careers. I at least know of no one who did not begin in the conventional manner (the first or second wine-glass) followed by many years of exploration among other methods of rendering nature before the final stage was approached. And it should be emphasized that the abstract painters today owe more to Seurat, Cézanne, and particularly the cubists than to the original initiators of abstraction. The work of the pioneers in the abstract (1911—Kandinsky, Delaunay, Kupka) was disordered and chaotic. The new world was still without the internal scaffolding such as a strong tradition required. This the cubists supplied, although they themselves clung to their objects and continued by a different path.

I must here insert that I make no pretense at speaking inclusively; and furthermore that I am aware that different painters—in abstraction as in any other category—approach their métier from opposing standpoints and are impelled by quite different motives. I shall from here on concentrate on my own approach to picture-construction because I can be sure only of what I do myself (and that not always); from conversations I have found that it is to a certain extent typical. It is doubtful that any two artists follow quite the same procedure, or even that one artist proceeds in quite the same way in any two pictures. Rules seem to be restrictions that no branch of art is capable of surviving for long.

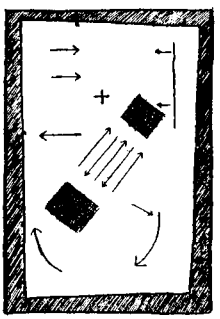
The painter of naturalistic subjects, no matter how tightly the overtones may be laced into the structure, starts with his subject; he has decided before he begins that his picture will represent a nude, a street-scene, or what-not. In other words he is about to fill a (usually) rectilinear surface with shapes whose juxtaposition is to a considerable extent predetermined by their functions as picturesque embellishments. The abstract artist also starts with a rectangle* which he is resolved upon filling with shapes (if he is Mondrian or Greene he might call it dividing into spaces). But in the new conception each shape is determined by its structural and expressive purpose. Therefore it is not with any pictorial suggestiveness that the abstract artist starts, but with shapes or forces

*There is of course no reason why paintings *should* be rectangular and they are *not* always so. It is merely the easiest space to control as well as the most practical to stretch and frame. Early Renaissance paintings are frequently irregular (sometimes in the shape of a cross), Braque has done beautiful elliptical pictures, and some of Shaw's most successful works are his abstract "plastic polygons."

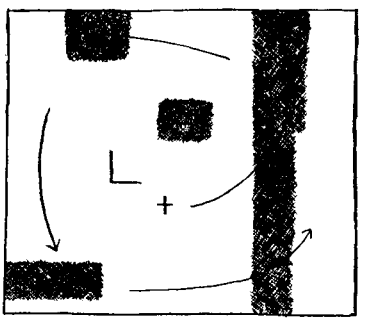
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that will provoke a plastic response. The process is perhaps analogous to the musician who first evolves a theme, then enlarges it into a tonal fabric that will induce any one who hears it to dance, to experience melancholy, or whatever the case may be.

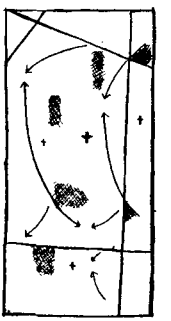
I find that my own compositions are most frequently set in motion by a series of movements in opposition that come into my mind before even a sketch of them appears on paper. To clarify this conception I submit the following diagrams which represent three since-completed paintings (photographs of each in its final state are reproduced with this article) in the very initial phase. It should be emphasized that what is set down in this chart never before went beyond my unconscious, and in each case has nothing to do *as design* with the ultimate character of its respective painting in the completed state. In order to give these forces a tangible existence I have resorted to a set of symbols, with the following notation: movement is denoted by arrows aimed in the direction of motion; an indefinite weight (in this stage the masses are felt merely as weights without definite contour or shape) by a cross-hatched area; and fixed forms (without strong directional movement, such as a square or circle) by a cross.



Composition No. 1



Composition No. 2



Composition No. 3

In diagram number 1 the strongest motion is an oblique one near the center, which sets the character for the picture. As indicated, this movement passes between the two weighted areas that seem to have split apart from each other. Against this there is a minor balancing movement across the top of the picture, from left

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to right, and another swinging clockwise around the bottom. Painting number 2 starts from a broad radial motion over a space divided into two very unequal parts. I have always liked this conception of a composition laterally split in two and joined by a rhythmic unity between the inner elements. Number 3 (which was from the beginning conceived as a mural) shows a trapezoidal division of spaces that seems to enhance the flatness of the wall. Over this spatial conception a conflict of directional forces pushes from right to left, while a weight seems to slide back from each apex back toward the right again. For me, as can be readily observed, the basis of a composition seems to be the generation of some conflict that eventually gets held in repose.

For the next stage I surround myself with sheets of scratch-paper and start to set things down in tangible form, at first using any shapes that come into my head quite arbitrarily just to get something down with which to start working. Sometimes a color-scheme suggests itself at the start, usually it is evolved at a later stage, and is never completely realized, in my case, until the painting has begun to take shape upon the canvas.

In regard to the impulse which determines the shapes it is difficult to write conclusively. The oddest, most casual forms in nature may sometimes become the seeds for abstract pictures. The markings made by a leak on the ceiling, a cloud, a piece of some mechanism, a newspaper advertisement, almost anything can suggest a shape for a painting. Gertrude Stein did not exhibit a very broad knowledge of abstract art when she wrote "all abstract shapes are pornographic that is a fact," but here is another influence from nature which some artists (Arp and Miró) have incorporated. Arp frequently starts a new work from what he calls "compositions par hasard"; he will tear up three or four scraps of paper and proceed to drop them from a height of a foot or two. When they happen to fall into some combination which suggests an interesting interplay of form, he will paste them just as they landed and from the resulting arrangement develop his composition. Gallatin once made a good abstract painting suggested by an airplane photograph of Kenilworth Castle. The period of Hélion which I most admire seems to have roots in the early water-colors of de la Fresnaye and Léger; of course this in no way detracts from Hélion's quality or originality. The artist selects his material

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wherever he finds it; it is the final expression that counts and this cannot be counterfeited. Picasso is the prime example of such ability to incorporate (and conscious imitation was even more prevalent in the Renaissance when it was a thoroughly accepted means of art production). Ben Nicholson presents a different attitude again toward construction. He found that he responded more strongly to *de*struction than to *con*struction, and that he got his richest quality from *destroying* painted surfaces. So in his recent works he builds up forms thickly, then scrapes them away, leaving beautiful accidental effects. Needless to say, the maximum skill is requisite for the free handling of such accidentals.

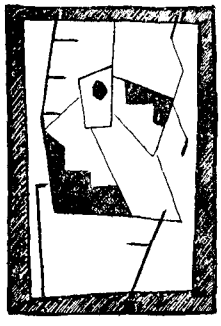
The above serves to demonstrate that the methods of approach among various non-representational artists are very diverse; furthermore that abstract pictures do not spring from *pure* invention but are often linked, however remotely, with the artist's visual surroundings. This subject will be pursued further when reactions to color are explored.

Let us now return to the three paintings for which I had just begun to make marks on scratch-paper. I have said that the shapes which I select are usually arbitrary; this is true only to a limited extent. At the picture's first inception—when the abstract motions are still in my mind—the *kind* of forms that seem to go with the particular type of composition automatically assert themselves, not the actual contours but the general style, whether geometric, amoeboid, circular, quadrilateral, etc. Shapes of the type in question then crowd into the picture and I enter a sort of trial and error stage. I think that it is a factor of importance that the trial and error period comes at this particular point and furthermore that it takes place on scratch-paper rather than on the canvas. The result is that when I finally approach the canvas I am in a position to handle the fabric with considerable freedom. For abstract painting can present a disturbing problem without some preparatory realization. If one side of a picture appears uncomfortably underweighted, one tries to stick something in as a balance which in turn makes the opposite corner fly out of control, and the problem becomes like that of poking an over-sized object into a sack that invariably pops out the other end. However I hesitate to expand this into a rule. Many claim, for instance, that Picasso never knows what he is going to paint until he approaches his

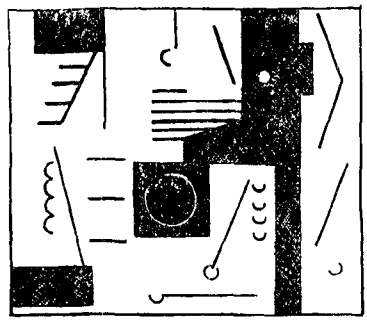
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

canvas, and some of his good pictures do show sections that have obviously been painted out and altered. Yet it is interesting to note that he executed two versions of his most complete realization, the *Three Musicians*, and that it is the later version (in the Museum of Living Art, New York University) that is incomparably the more smoothly organized; furthermore there are innumerable drawings and gouaches which demonstrate many preparatory stages of development. Picasso's happy accidents I look upon as his reward for perhaps the most fluent technique in the history of painting.

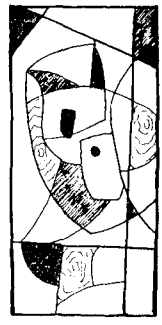
Most pictures, however, require advance realization for the finished product to emerge with complete "authority." The artist must approach his final medium somewhat as a concert-performer faces an audience, with the numbers well learned, free to project an expressive equipment built up thoroughly in advance. In regard to my own three paintings, therefore, I am not ready to approach the canvas as yet. Naturally, the more finely an artist's sensibility is developed the less tense this period of trial and error becomes. He will find that certain shapes as soon as they are set down *require* other particular shapes for the maintenance of specific positions, and similarly certain colors require certain other shades. If one form is set uncomfortably far to one side or another the others will cry out for its position to be altered. Of course, there is more to abstract painting than merely the satisfaction and pacification of such requirements. In some places the artist will purposely include two forces that jar, or he will keep two forces apart that seem to draw together because he wants that particular type of activity. The next diagram shows each of the three pictures at a stage in which the shapes are about to take their definitive forms:



Composition No. 1



Composition No. 2



Composition No. 3

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The large central area of activity which was from the beginning the most striking feature of number 1, now approaches its definitive form. The two black shapes are so cut out that it is apparent that they *could* fit into each other, which gives the spectator an unconscious desire to push them together. This by itself would make a disturbing composition, but the rather static shape between holds them steady, while the heavy line near the apex of the lower angle seems to divert the eye toward the trapezoidal rim, and on the way it follows the segments cut off by the divisions.

The second painting is divided into fairly rectilinear sections slightly varied by the obliques. (The little repeated half-circles are too small to count as more than tactile rhythms.) Up to now I have neglected the important tactile aspect of abstract painting. As soon as one looks at shapes depicted on a plane, one's fingers instinctively seem to pass over the surfaces, acting as a sort of transmitter between the eye and the brain. Passing (hypothetically) over this particular surface the fingers, guided first by the eye to the central section,* reach the district above, comprising six horizontal lines. Here they encounter a texture akin to guitar-strings; guitar strings are in no way depicted but the plastic equivalent is something of the sort. The other smaller circles function as holding-spots at other places where they seem to be required. Repetitions of lines and curves are also introduced where strong staccato rhythms are needed to break the massive weight of the rectangular forms.

Composition number 3 is of a different type; conceived as a mural decoration its prime requisite was to hold on to the surface of the wall (in contrast to the easel-painting which provides a section removed from the wall behind it.) Purely directional (or linear) configurations, which play such a part in numbers 1 and 2, are avoided here (the lines in the chart merely signify the boundaries between adjacent shapes), as they always tend to detach themselves from the mural surface; and the wall-consciousness is enhanced by three of the shapes which are frescoed in imitation of wood. In other words, instead of standing out against a background, the shapes here fit upon a single plane, except for the two small central black shapes, which are fixed exactly and intensified by being modelled in low relief.

*A square or circle is always first to catch the eye owing to its completely static lack of direction.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

3.

The final phase of picture-building starts with the transmission of the structure on to the canvas. The diagrams have naturally been unable to indicate any stages of color-development; the tints are usually approximated in water-color as the shapes become finally established, although they also begin to be felt before they make their actual appearance. Color-expression has a relation to the artist's unconscious somewhat analogous to that of the shapes. Picasso has recounted that after a day in the forest of Fontainebleau he would paint a green picture to get the "greenness" out of his system. Well-known are the violent intensifications of color that have permeated the works of most painters from Gauguin to Roux who have visited the tropics. In my own paintings I have noticed color-variations between work that I do in summer and winter; the physical effects of seasonal changes are noticeable. One year I executed a gouache-series in Rome, and with no preconceived intention the dominant colors tended toward heavy purples and wine-reds, although the shapes with which I was experimenting were forms from American Indian parchments that demanded a quite different scheme. I have at no other time shown any allegiance to the Italian baroque color-scale.

The time has now come to execute the three projected paintings. The solution at which I have arrived on the scratch-paper is copied (usually in charcoal) as the actual foundation for the painting. This I render as loosely as possible (actual tracing I find a restriction) because alterations become inevitable when a composition is seen for the first time tremendously enlarged, no matter how much the enlargement was prepared for in advance. From here on the steps become difficult to discuss, as color and tone-values bring one continually closer to the artist's personality.* The more highly developed a work of art, the more exacting become the demands on taste. A double task is now confronted. On the one hand the various color-approximations must be "keyed"

*The relation of "quality" to form and structure may be easily misconstrued from an article such as this. A work of art may of course answer the requirements that I am emphasizing of construction and taste and still be comparatively negligible in its expressive range, as the structural fabric projects something of the artist which is beyond the scope of analysis. Similarly, one cannot determine beyond a certain point just why a fine vintage-wine is *better* than an inferior beverage; yet although there may be many who prefer coca-cola, somehow or other a rare Burgundy seems to retain its distinguished quality.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into an ordered unity; and on the other each separate shape must comfortably absorb its color and tone. Some painters can perhaps realize their forms completely in advance. I have usually to get my fingers working upon the fabrication before I can even approach such a realization. In striving to attain the final quality I rely on a wide range of "accidental" effects. If a color does not justify its position I allow it to dry, then glaze over thinly. One has to know, of course, how glazes react upon specific undercoats. Sometimes a shape is gone over many times and the result will present a richness of texture that can never be achieved through a direct impasto. As previously stated, accidental effects require the most complete technical equipment, for no result must ever *seem* haphazard. I feel that my own work becomes most expressive when I allow the brush-strokes to remain visible. Many abstract painters, on the other hand, feel that modern art-works must be finished with a rigidity and tightness that will hold in competition with manufactured objects. In this case color and design alone assert the quality. I sometimes further stir the picture-surface by grading the tones into cast shadows, not for the sake of light-effects, but as a reinforcement to the form.

To sum up, the painting stage resolves into a final tightening and unification of all the structural and expressive elements. Well-realized pictures have this in common,—that every section seems to "fit," conceived in a single spirit that strikes the spectator with a unified impact, like a tightly-clenched fist held in control. Here we have the completed revolt against the nineteenth century "window conception" as typified by Whistler's remark that the painting must always be "behind the frame."

After following the development of these paintings there may be some who will agree that pictures should indeed be constructed on an architectural basis, but that there can be similar arrangements employing representational shapes; thus additional qualities might be introduced with these picturesque associations. In art schools I have heard students being told that all great paintings present the basic qualities of abstraction. I do not find this to be true. I have never seen a naturalistic picture which could stand comparison with an abstraction on the latter's ground. Representational art can go compositionally as far as the *first* stage of the three paintings we have analyzed. The general rhythmic move-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ments are well organized in most of the fine Renaissance paintings, much more strongly than in the Inness landscape here reproduced. And the old masters patterned the broad masses with considerable feeling. The next step was the inevitable division of these masses into their naturalistic components (a head does have to be attached to a body after all, the shoulders must support long tubular appendages that represent arms, and in a landscape the sky—unless filled with airplanes, birds, or foliage, is hard to invest with structural ribs comparable to those provided by the solid forms beneath). So it is that the concentration upon shape was bound to lose its freedom. When everything has been added from fingers to facial expressions, the spectator's eye usually becomes the prey to localized activities and the painting no longer strikes with its completely unified impact. (Perhaps my particular fondness for unfinished and partially destroyed works by old masters, which show the structural masses without the illustrational refinements, can thus be accounted for,—such as the unfinished Leonardo in the Uffizi, the ruined Cimabue at Assisi, not to mention the headless and armless sculptures of antiquity.) However I never maintain, as many modern artists have done, that naturalistic pictures may not be deeply expressive. I only say that what abstract art can offer is something *different* and something particularly pertinent to our time. We are surrounded by efforts to weld the two conceptions of painting into a single unit. For a time the attempt was supported by a strong tradition (Juan Gris, Picasso in his cubist period, etc.) But the abstract impulse was not for long able to stand appeasement; in the present period I do not find efforts at straddling that satisfy. Conscious movements toward reincorporating literature (such as surrealism) are rarely able to hold on to the internal qualities, and already a vulgarity and "fakeness" permeates much of their paintings; a few on the border-line (Klee, Miró, Gonzalez) have remained rooted in the abstract conception, with the naturalistic over-meanings playing a small part through the best of their work. An era of convulsion evidently requires of artists that they restrict their horizons and close in upon a consciously ordered world where every facet is completely understood. The period so like our own which witnessed the break-up of the Roman Empire produced the Byzantine mosaics; they are perhaps the "quietest" and most stylized of any expressions before twentieth century abstractions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Much has been written of the cultural cycles and their continual fluctuations between abstraction and naturalism. Music has presented similar courses, although historically in reverse. Painting has started its cycles quite abstractly (with markings on vases, textiles, and simple funeral objects) and proceeded toward naturalism, with abstraction coming forward again and again as the herald of a new opposing order whenever the cycle recommenced. The roots of musical traditions, on the other hand, were grounded in literature, as an embellishment for religious rituals and dramas, or to accompany dances usually of narrative significance. (At such stages in the cycle most audiences would doubtless have found a string-quartet or orchestral concert as unrewarding as the average visitor to the bourgeois galleries today looks upon a show of abstract pictures.) History is inclined to refute the popular conception that painting is essentially a literary art-form and music the true abstract expression.

The influence of the present abstract movement has already been deeply felt; a key-note has been set for modern architecture that has helped to strip our walls of tasteless non-essentials formerly considered "artistic." We must await the coördination of the arts* that has to date been curiously lacking. However, as functional architecture and decoration, with roots genuinely grounded in modern living, become more familiar and more widely disseminated, perhaps we can again find a unity and directness of expression which America has not known since the days of the New England primitives, when society was homogeneous and self-sufficing. As the world awakens now to the new and appropriate language, there should be a place in this atmosphere for paintings in which every section is completely felt and understood, that do not depict "life" but which are themselves fragments of life, independent and self-contained as any tree or stone.

*The ill-digested expressive coördination of our time can be appreciated if we examine the comparatively few modern interiors in American buildings. When artworks are selected for rooms in other respects suggesting the twentieth century the favorite resort seems to be an object from the Orient or an Audubon print. Rockefeller Center demonstrates on a larger scale how modern architects fall back on vulgar and out-moded types of illustration for decorative accents.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The familiar landscape by Inness, entitled *Peace and Plenty*, is reproduced for purposes of comparison, on the same page as a painting that is completely abstract, designated here as *Composition No. 2. Peace and Plenty* (typical of what many people, even today, think of as a modern work of art) presents some obvious features that the artist has put down for our enjoyment. The sky is imbued with a tolerably naturalistic opalescence, the green of the trees, although a trifle lustreless, holds a definite lure for city-dwellers; the haystacks, wagon, and farmers taking in the hay provide a human touch. When seen on the wall the painting serves as a sort of window—a very ideal window—that always shows us a scene in which we would enjoy a walk in the late afternoon. We could add that any one who happened to dislike the country would derive small pleasure from such a scene as this.

In technical equipment Inness limited himself to the first two figures of the wine-glass chart. The abstract picture adheres largely to the last, with certain leanings toward the cubist and even the Cézanne stage of development. Compositionally the two paintings betray a resemblance that is perhaps unlooked for,—they both center around a radial configuration. Inness's circle is merely suggested, by the grouping of the elm-trees with the lower circumference formed by the two men conversing in the foreground. The abstract painting centers upon a quite obvious circle around which the composition moves radially. In the landscape we can further note that the background breaks into mist around the elms thus enabling the dark mass to fit comfortably into the picture-surface. The background of the abstract picture is similarly broken behind the central shape for the same reason, but instead of fading into mist, the back plane appears violently broken toward the center, thus decreasing its resistance as a plane.* The rectangle in the upper left-hand corner similarly fits into a broken surface.

Returning now to the Inness, the composition contains, beside the circle, an obtuse angle running on its side completely across the picture with its base on the left border. One side is marked by the people standing in the field, the other by the tops of the trees. Aside from a calculated placing of the spots this is about all there is to the composition, and it might be noted that there is no particularly interesting relation between the indicated circle and triangle; nothing *expressive* is projected through the relationship, they are merely there and nothing more. (In the finest

*Without the actual colors this effect becames difficult to visualize. A further limitation of this photograph is an unfortunate cutting off of the painting at the bottom. The dark form should not be resting in the lower left-hand corner as it here appears but rather thrust from the side with the back plane continuing beneath it, as in the diagram on page 410; in the photograph a sagging effect is produced whereas this form should continue the radial motion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

works of the Renaissance the structure at least integrated the various sections of the canvas sufficiently to hold the figures steady.) The whole top half (the sky) is completely static, whereas in the abstract painting the composition spreads all over the picture-surface and is organized outward to cover every section.

The recent works by Julio Gonzalez and Hans Hartung are included not merely to show that the abstract artists of the Paris School are forcefully continuing their work with whatever equipment they can muster, but to demonstrate other aspects of the movement than those we are analyzing in the article. The watercolor by Gonzalez (the Spanish sculptor who has exerted considerable influence on Picasso among others) differs from the other works presented because, although abstract in conception, it still remotely indicates a human figure. If we look at this suggestion of reality from the point of view from which we examined the Inness landscape, we could hardly deny that Gonzalez has done a pretty poor job of representation. It is astonishing how many reputable critics persist in judging work of the Gonzalez-type in just this way, as though it were intended merely to depict an aspect of nature and failed through perversity or gross incompetence. For many observers such pictures resemble those puzzles of our childhood, in which we were shown a busy barnyard scene and were asked to find George Washington and three Revolutionary generals outlined among the branches and cobblestones. The important paintings of the modern movement have nothing in common with any kind of puzzles. Similarly, lovers of the occult, who have expectations that abstract works may be concealing some specific hidden messages, will be disappointed by my interpretations.

What Gonzalez is showing us has an obvious relation to a personage with a knife in one hand and a book in the other. If he doesn't explain the personage further it is because that is all that is essential to the emotion he wishes to project. For the rest we must merely *look* at his picture as though it were a completely abstract work. And we must not forget that Gonzalez is a sculptor and thinks in terms of sculpture. Hence to him the filling of the rectangle is unimportant; he concentrates upon organizing the configuration as a unit against an open background. Notice the beautiful placing of the fingers against the pages of the book.

The Hartung stands even closer to complete abstraction, for the human pattern is almost completely ignored; arms and a head are merely suggested because of the position of certain shapes. Much stronger is the esthetic appeal of the square containing the oval, placed very sensitively between the two curved forms (that can be looked upon as arms) which hold it firm like a pair of parentheses.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"What Is Fascism?" — The Discussion Continued

1. A Letter from Victor Serge

Sirs:

I read with lively interest the articles by James Burnham and Dwight Macdonald in the May-June issue of PARTISAN REVIEW. The following notes on them may be of interest to your readers.

1.

All the criticism of Marxism in Burnham's article seems to me to be beside the point: insofar as it is accurate, it applies to that 'vulgar Marxism' of the ignorant and simpleminded who are inevitably numerous in any large movement. It overlooks completely the enormous contributions made by Marxism to the history of our times. Where are the forecasts and the projects of the authors of the Versailles Treaty or of the Dawes Plan? But the International Socialist Congress of Basle clearly foretold the first world war; the Russians demonstrated a hundred times that Versailles Europe was not viable; Lenin forecast "the second round of world wars and revolutions" even before the illusions of prosperity and rationalization of the twenties; finally, in writing about events in Russia, China, Germany, the Marxists have given us such far-sighted works as Lenin's *The Road to Power*, Trotsky's writings on the Chinese Revolution of 1927, on the German situation in 1933, on the development of the Russian Revolution.

On the other hand, Burnham's sudden and amazing abandonment of the Marxist method leads him, despite an extremely realistic point of view, to commit some gross errors in perspective both as to the past and as to the future. It is historically false to say that the Russian Revolution was a 'managerial' revolution. That is to distort the facts so as to make them fit into a new theoretical schema. It is the peasant masses which, in 1917, backing up with an immense and victorious *Jacquerie* the mutiny of a great part of the army (a peasant army, aroused by workingclass agitators) and the workers' insurrection in the capital cities (enlightened by certain socialist intellectuals whose prodigious merit it was to raise to the level of consciousness a movement which was produced independently of them)—these are the forces which gave the victory to the Bolsheviks. The technicians, administrators, intellectuals and other 'managers' oppose this revolution, and fight it for years. Furthermore, Burnham's theory amounts to a false justification of the Russian Thermidor, which it makes the organic result of the preceding revolution. Once more, it does violence to the facts. The opposition between the regimes of Lenin and of Stalin, of 1917-1927 and of 1928-1941, is attested by the scope of the black terror which physically exterminated the generation of October '17. Economi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cally, it is proved by the changed conditions of the workers: the lowering of real wages (15% to 30% as compared to 1926).

Burnham is no happier in his predictions about the immediate future. His article appeared in May; his purely theoretical explanation of the Nazi-Soviet Pact is already belied by the end of June. The Russo-German war that he saw developing later, in the era of collectivist systems, after the victory of Germany over England—this has already burst out, showing that mortal incompatibility between Nazism and Stalinism which Marxists have long understood.

Far from refuting Marxist thought—serious thought, and not vulgar or reduced, as is often the case, to doctrinaire phrases—the events of the last years have strikingly confirmed it. From the beginning of the Russian revolution, the Marxists called on to direct it recognise the impossibility of installing a socialist regime in a great agrarian country (even though capitalism has collapsed). They see no solution for Russia and for Europe except in the socialisation of Germany, the only country which seems ripe for socialism; they conceive of industrialized Germany and agrarian Russia, united in a socialist federation, as the workshop of the social renewal of Eurasia. This great project falls through twice: when the Berlin uprisings are put down and when Tukachevsky is defeated under the walls of Warsaw by Weygand-Pilsudski. The victory of Marxism in either instance would have guided Europe onto an entirely new path, rendered Stalinism impossible (since it is the result of the isolation of Russia and the weakness of her industry), and made impossible the armament race and the present war. . . . Granted the tenuity of such historical hypotheses, it remains true that the school of thought which conceived them and the will which made them weapons on the battlefield have shown a power which is not, in principle, invalidated by defeat. (Today, a Galileo would perhaps be shot: he would be no less in the right for that. I admit that social history is a vaguer subject, but on the other hand our own will plays more of a necessary part in it.)

The concept of class struggle explains the history of the last twenty years with a luminous exactitude, which is to say that it is intelligible only in the light of Marxism. It is Marxism alone which allows us to understand the defeat of socialism in Europe. And it is in Marxist terms that Burnham indicates very well, in outline, the cause of socialism's defeat: the weakening of the social position of the workingclass. We must add a certain virulent growth of class consciousness on the part of the reactionaries (an access of consciousness which, however, ends up in a certain blindness. . . .) . . . Isn't the history of the last twenty years largely summed up in Foch's exclamation in 1918: "Better Ludendorf than Liebknecht!" What Foch sowed, Weygand reaped. The German bankers who said to themselves: "Better Nazism than Bolshevism!" have been served in the same way. Such judgments expose both the clarity and the blindness of reactionary class consciousness. (So, too, in another context, when Stalin expands in smiles because Ribbentrop has come to clasp his hand:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Better Ribbentrop than Trotsky!") The alternative, fascism or socialism, is not a theoretical alternative rightly open to criticism, it is a fact of the class struggle and it is never permissible to forget it. The defeats of the socialist movement are not necessarily defeats for Marxism. Marxism is an impassioned method of scientific investigation (in the service of mankind), socialism is a kind of rational social consciousness, an emotional aspiration, a movement, one might almost say a myth. Agreed that we are today defeated, we socialists, that should not discourage us too much if we see clearly why and how we have been beaten. After all, we are used to it, we know that we must be the defeated for a long time in order no longer to be so one day. And we have, in spite of everything, enough victories behind us to keep us going, provided we don't renounce the compass Marx has left to us.

Who would deny that the theories of Marx in 1848 need revision? On one vital point it is plain their expectations have been unrealised, although Trotsky in *The Living Thoughts of Karl Marx* tries to defend them even today. The Communist Manifesto of 1848 declares that the middle classes are incapable of playing a decisive role in events. A new middle class, quite different from the one Marx knew, has come into being and plays a decisive role in the revolutions and counter-revolutions of today. I am quite in agreement with Burnham on this matter of the 'managerial' class. A Russian Marxist had this idea before the 1917 revolution, Bogdanov, who was to some extent the intellectual rival of Lenin in the Bolshevik Party, and who put forward a theory about the dictatorship of the administrators. (Bogdanov made a show of opposition to Lenin; he died from the results of a scientific experiment in blood transfusion.) When industrialization began, Soviet engineers used to talk among themselves about the time when 'socialised industry will be controlled by the technicians.' This attitude seemed so dangerous to the ruling bureaucracy that the trial of the "Industrial Party" was staged partly to combat it. In France and Germany there was much talk of Technocracy. And finally, I find in my work-notes the following, which fits in perfectly with Burnham's ideas:

> The next European revolution will be fought on the terrain of planned economy—no longer for or against strangled capitalism . . . but over the question of management—for whom? to whose benefit? . . . The category of managers will tend to crystallize into a class and to monopolize power.

The general conception has thus been in the air some time. Burnham's theory has the merit, nowise incompatible with Marxism, of making clear the profoundly revolutionary character of the wars now going on. Capitalist economy is going under, yielding to new types of transitional planned economies; capitalism is so hopeless that we see the counter-revolutions it incited now forced to strangle their begetter, as in Germany and Italy and tomorrow elsewhere perhaps under other forms. But this does not do away with the problem of socialism. It remains in the very heart of these

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

planned economies, because of the clash of interests (material and immaterial) between the rulers and the masses. Nor should we neglect the factors of psychology and tradition. From this standpoint, the struggle bears quite different aspects, according to whether the new managerial class is the product of an anti-workingclass and anti-Marxist counter-revolution, respectful (in theory) of private property, wedded to the principles of authority and hierarchy, as is the case in Germany and Italy—or whether it is a class of usurpers who still invoke an ideology and tradition conflicting with its usurpation and standing for the democracy of work and the complete liberation of man. I emphasize this in order to emphasize that even from the viewpoint of the 'managerial revolution' deep antagonisms exist between Nazism and Stalinism. In every case, finally, when confronted with a planned economy, we should pose the question: Planned by whom? Planned for whom? Planned for what end? It is on this front that socialists will fight in the future, side by side with the masses.

2.

The position which Dwight Macdonald takes on the war seems badly formulated: "*first* a democratic socialist government. . . ." I think we must stick close to reality and that we cannot take flight in speculation. This condition, "*first*," being clearly unrealizable at present, it is bad propaganda. Better to recognize frankly that the Churchill regime is fighting *in spite of itself* for the European revolution, the defeat of the Nazis being the precondition of that; adding that in this struggle (in which we are *not* engaged in spite of ourselves—quite the contrary) we have other jobs than to give aid to governments which are subjectively reactionary, that is accomplices of the enemy, and objectively the playthings of historical necessities which they don't understand. We have our own jobs and it is only in doing these without compromise that we will contribute to the downfall of the Nazis—never in becoming conformist.

Thinking over Macdonald's thesis itself, I find no objections. It follows in the line of my own thought and of discussions I have had on the subject with a French socialist, very conservative but a good Marxist scholar—Lucien Laurat, now a prisoner in Germany. The article expresses in a closely reasoned and conclusive form something that many of us had already come to believe in a less systematic way, and is perhaps an important theoretical contribution. I am curious to know the arguments that are being made on the other side.

Apropos of the allusion to the possibility of a permanent state of war: in '36 I proposed to some Spanish friends that we should formulate alongside the immediate demand for workers' control of production, workers' control of the army as well. The idea still seems a good one.

For a host of reasons, I don't believe in a Nazi victory. Even should I be forced to accept one, I would abandon neither Marxism nor socialism, the quest for truth and the defense of mankind being independent of victories or defeats in the march of history. (I'm not at all worried about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being called an idealist.) I see a great advantage for socialism in the fact that the coming struggles will take place in Europe, on a terrain already swept clean by the collapse of capitalism, on the terrain of collectivism. Even in times of relative peace, bureaucratic collectivism has its own internal contradictions. If it should succeed in imposing itself on the continent through a military victory, it would be infinitely more powerful than capitalism ever was. Yet in the social decay and economic ruin which would spread through Europe after a lost war, we would glimpse, at death grips in the very heart of the new system, the forces of revolution and of conservatism.

The forces on which socialism can count are the following:

a huge proletariat, worn out by long hours of labor, under-nourishment, and low wages

masses of soldiers who will have had their bellyful of fighting

farmers without bread, from whom are taken their sons and the products of their labor

impoverished middle class people, intellectuals and white-collar workers, who will feel the catastrophe with especial keenness

Opposing these will be the counter-revolutionary forces:

the ruling hierarchy (who will try to escape by plane on the fifth day of the awakening of the masses)

the middle ranks of the bureaucracy (one part of which will try to get on the side of the stronger party at all costs)

the pretorians of the regime, the Gestapo, OGPU, and their hangers-on —the swarm of loathesome petty functionaries; these will form the shock troops of the counter-revolution. Innumerable, this vermin begins with the janitor. . . .

To return to the PARTISAN REVIEW articles a moment, may I say in conclusion that I don't at all like the subtitle, "Is Fascism a 'New Order'?", even with the quotation marks. Our language should be infused with our spirit—language is not neuter. There is no *order* for us, in these times, in the exploitation of man by man, and nothing *new* in despotism (indeed, there have been plenty of totalitarian essays in the past). Nazism brings an order new only in relation to capitalism, made up of old things that we hate, a really phenomenal retrogression, war being the oldest thing in the world.

Yours, etc.
VICTOR SERGE

June 26, 1941

(Translated from the French by Dwight Macdonald)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

2. *Fascism and Capitalism*
—by Marceau Pivert

THE AMAZING POWER of the Nazi war machine has led certain writers to ask whether it is not the fact that Germany has gone beyond the stage of capitalism that makes it so much stronger than the 'democracies.' This is, specifically, the theory developed by Dwight Macdonald in the May-June, 1941, number of PARTISAN REVIEW. In the following notes, I should like to consider whether fascism (like Stalinism) is today a *post-capitalist* system of 'bureaucratic collectivism.'

The most striking feature of early capitalism, of course, is competition. Competition within the ruling class, between groups of salaried employees, and between the owners and the non-owners. A mighty industrial development accompanies this 'free competition.' A creative frenzy seems to seize on the entire globe. The workers are stripped of their old traditions and guild safeguards and flung into the battle. (It was the French Revolution which suppressed the privileges of the guilds by the Le Chatelier laws.) The captains of industry set out to discover new countries, dig canals, build railroads, breed one machine out of another, excavate continents. Competition is the supreme law, the quest for profit the sole motive force. All this means simply that the strongest, the best equipped and armed *are free*—to exploit 'inferior races' and penniless workers. From the purely moral and philosophic standpoint, *fascism clearly has not gone beyond this system.* It has simply carried it to a remarkable pitch of perfection.

But this early phase of anarchic development speedily creates new economic ties between competitors. The great banking and industrial powers ally themselves into antagonistic groups, first within the framework of the nation, then of the empire, and finally their empires range themselves for the fight to divide the world by force of arms. *It could not be otherwise under capitalism: certain nations must preserve and if possible extend their sources of raw materials, their markets, their fields for investment; the others must try to conquer these, under pain of economic strangulation.* The 1914-1918 war was fought to settle, provisionally, this conflict. Just as that war did not cause the collapse of capitalism, so the present war may be expected to have the same kind of consequences, aggravated by the prodigious increase in the forces of production.

But the force of capitalist expansion is not only 'extensive,' it is also 'intensive.' The ruling classes not only prepare to fight for markets, but *at the same time* they must *organize* mutually in order to produce more profitably and efficiently. In certain circumstances, they realize it is much

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

better to come to an understanding than to fight. Inside the national boundaries, this means concentration of capital and monopolization. And beyond the frontiers, the great trusts sketch out the first bold strokes of the world economy of tomorrow. But at the same time, imperialist competition being sharper than ever, the web spun by international capitalism is constantly being torn by the struggle for a new division of the world.

To the concentration of capital the workers replied by organizing trade unions, mutual aid societies, cooperatives for the collective defense of their class interests. Just as the division of surplus value is settled by the relative strength of various capitalist groups, so the burden of the labor that produces surplus value is distributed according to the strength of the various workingclass organizations. Wage increases won by the better organized workers are shifted onto the backs of weaker sections of the workingclass. Thus if the high union rates of the printing craft makes it expensive to print the firm's catalog, the management can simply cut the wages of the unorganized office workers. Under capitalism, bosses and workers alike try to 'get out from under' by shifting the burden to their class brothers. Camoflauged in one place, capitalist competition reappears in another.

The general tendency to organization, which might have led to a revolutionary change if it had followed class lines on an international scale, has led to fascism because basic class interests have been concealed by secondary interests. We have seen miners—or rather their leaders—supporting the maneuvers of Mr. De Wendel to get permission to continue to export Briey iron ore to Nazi Germany. Or the miners of the Pas-de-Calais joining with the coal barons to raise tariffs at the expense of the consumer. Fascist propaganda has cleverly exploited these apparent identities of interest between worker and boss. Fascism's great aim has been realized: the ruling class has tamed the opposition of its own workingclass, the better to conduct its imperialist struggle.

The chief economic feature of fascism is that the fascists have applied to labor power the same methods of monopoly control and rationalized exploitation as are applied by capitalist trusts to raw materials, markets and credits. The new regime has become proprietor of a mighty force: the labor power of the workers, organized into a gigantic 'trust' of arms, of brains, of skills of all kinds, none of which from now on will remain unemployed. It is true that the organization of labor power, as of the capitalist trusts, can achieve great efficiency. Many examples can be cited: guilds, cooperatives, municipal enterprises. But it is wrong to assume that these advantages enable the collective unit in question to cut itself off from the rest of the world. It continues to be subject to the laws of capitalism. The history of the sad failures of cooperative banks in France and Belgium shows that world capitalism imposes its laws on these fragile organisms of limited 'collectivism.'

It is precisely this historic necessity that imposes itself on fascism. Granted that it has, in its integral organization, gone far beyond the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bounds of anarchic private economy. Every one must submit to the general plan. True. But true also in England, and soon in America as well. The question is: *who directs the economy, and for what end?* A bureaucratic caste bound to the dominant portion of the capitalist class directs the German economy *towards imperialist war.* Since 1935, under the direction of General Thomas, all production, all capital accumulation, all distribution is regulated by the requirements of imperialist war. Competition, suppressed within, appears more ravenous than ever on the field of foreign policy. Hitler lays down the law to the German capitalists and to those of the occupied nations, but the capitalist regime which surrounds him, which impregnates him, which still survives him, in its turn dictates to him its unalterable orders. Monopoly of banks, of production, of brain and brawn—what is it all used for? For destruction, for the aggravation of the deepest kind of antagonisms. It is no more possible for him to suppress capitalism than it is to escape from competition to the death with other imperialist powers. Competition is everywhere.

It exists also between the German workers and those of other lands. It is, in fact, on an enormously magnified scale, the problem of the organized printers and the unorganized office workers. The workers of Germany selfishly wish to live at the expense of Polish, Czech, French workers. Part of the British workingclass lived quite well off the exploitation of hundreds of millions of colonial slaves. But what is the upshot of this forgetfulness not of a *sentiment* of solidarity but of a *mechanism* of compensation? The continuation of war between the workers, since they have adopted as their own the sordid interests of their masters. But everything will be paid for in the end! Because they have forgotten the basic community of their interests, the workers see themselves condemned either to rule by force or to be exploited like the so-called 'inferior' races. Fascism has obviously carried the system to a monstrously refined extreme. But it has not yet escaped from the phenomenon of compensation, which loads onto the backs of the weaker the weight of the advantages temporarily obtained by the stronger. The 'weaker' are today one hundred million anti-Nazi Europeans. The problem is not solved. The field of competition has simply been shifted. There is no 'New Order,' merely a stage of superbarbarism in the old order. This conclusion imposes itself all the more imperiously because the hour of a worldwide economic order has struck.

Fascism is not a post-capitalist regime. It is a form of capitalist degeneration. If one deduced from an analysis of a workers' cooperative or a trade union or a municipal enterprise that such organisms had 'gone beyond capitalism,' because one does not find in their internal economy any free market, any competition or sale of labor power—then one would be making the same mistake as to isolate, for analysis, fascist economy from world economy. Today it is world economy which dominates. Even in wartime, through the medium of international trusts, it continues to rule.

One huge area is claimed to have escaped from the world market: Soviet Russia. Has Stalin built a socialist society? or even a 'post-capi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

talist'? This is another question, but to it I would also say, No. Stalinist degeneration is a product of that persistence of a capitalist milieu which imposes its own laws. 1941: 24% increase in military expenditures. Those are not consumers' goods! Add police expenses and you have 37% of the Soviet budget absorbed by this kind of expenses. Is not the mark of capitalist economy, completely oriented towards war, everywhere evident?

So too on an even greater scale with fascism. Its perspective is the maintainance of an unheard-of social tension, the defense of its conquests against the slaves who will revolt. And the limitless conquest of new territory. It cannot stop, for the limits of its self-sufficient economic unit are those of the globe. Raw materials are rather capriciously distributed. There is thirty times as much oil in America as in the countries controlled by the Axis. But Germany has coal and iron? What about tungsten, nickel, vanadium, molybdenum, without which the specialized steels of modern industry cannot be made? The very idea of the domination of the world by an alleged 'superior race' is a product of capitalist civilization, and is the supreme proof that Hitler has not escaped from this system, and cannot escape.

The concept of a world economy run by brutal masters ruling over millions of slaves not only clashes with the deepest human instinct for liberty as well as for security. But these economic tendencies also lay the groundwork for a world-wide socialist economy, the only possible solution to the envenomed antagonisms of our time. Free competition yields to monopoly, the free labor market to the collective exploitation of labor power by the fascist bureaucracy. The whole strength of fascism lies in its monopoly of labor power. It is just this monopoly control that the workingclass must shatter, if it is to free itself and to pursue its own ends. Then, and only then, will capitalism be left behind!

(Translated and edited by Dwight Macdonald)

3. *Add: "End of German Capitalism"*

—by Dwight Macdonald

Author's Note: Below is printed what was to have been the concluding section of my article in the May-June issue, "The End of German Capitalism." Lack of space has forced its postponement until now. It stands as originally set up in type last spring.

In the above article I was concerned with demonstrating that German fascism is an economic phenomenon of a radically different order from anything that can be termed, either economically or historically, 'capitalism.' Of necessity, this has caused me to overstress—considering my own views—both its 'revolutionary'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

novelty and its economic strength and stability. In conclusion, therefore, I want to sketch out briefly an approach to the broader problems raised by the rise of fascism. A serious discussion of these points must be left to another time, but here I can at least indicate a point of view.

This may perhaps best be done by posing, and answering, three questions:

(1) *Is this a new form of society analogous to capitalism, and does the Nazi revolution stand to the old capitalist order as the bourgeois revolution stood in relation to the old feudal order?*

(2) *What are fascism's chances for stability and historical permanence? Are they comparable to those of the bourgeoisie at the end of the middle ages?*

(3) *Is this a specifically German phenomenon or is it a worldwide tendency?*

To (1) I should say No. As I have already pointed out in PARTISAN REVIEW (July-August, 1940), the fascist 'revolution' is of an entirely different order than the bourgeois revolution. The latter was politically progressive, introducing concepts ('Liberty, Equality, Fraternity') and forms (parliamentary democracy) which were at least an improvement on those of feudalism; the former both politically and culturally represents a historical regression so drastic that the Rights of Man proclaimed in 1789 have once more taken on a revolutionary character. Economically, the bourgeois revolution introduced a completely new mode of production; the fascist 'revolution' represents merely a partial reorganization of the existing mode of production, superior to capitalism but much inferior to socialism. In achieving their revolution, the bourgeoisie struck the feudal fetters off the peasantry and the workers as well; the Nazi 'revolution' frees no other class, but on the contrary means an intensification of the autocratic tendencies of monopoly capitalism. Finally, the basic difference between the two revolutions is that the bourgeois was a conscious process, developing according to a consistent rationale which challenged the old feudal system sharply at every point, whereas the fascist movement has an unconscious, improvised character, lacking any consistent ideology—"a patchwork of old concepts . . . which have no consistency and no aim beyond the utility of the moment." The brute pressure of the needs of *Wehrwirtschaft*, the impossibility of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

finding either a conservative-bourgeois or a radical-socialist solution for the crisis of German capitalism—these blind historical forces have pushed into power a band of adventurers, opportunist to the core (and the Men for the Job precisely because they are opportunist), who have played off one social class against another, compromising and maneuvering between conflicting ideologies and economic systems, manipulating every factor with the single aim of maintaining themselves in power.

For the answer to question (2) I again refer the reader to my article of last summer, where (pages 257-8) I list the enormous difficulties facing Hitler *after* the conquest of the Continent, difficulties which still are largely unsolved. A cardinal error made by many bourgeois observers today is to overestimate the stability and workability of Nazism. Economically, German fascism has serious weaknesses of its own, typical of all such 'bureaucratic collectivist' regimes. (There is no space to go into this important subject here; for the moment, I can only refer the reader to two recent books in which these economic weaknesses are described in detail—for Germany, Guenter Reimann's *The Vampire Economy;* for Russia, Freda Utley's *The Dream We Lost.*) Politically, also, Nazism faces serious problems of its own, especially now that it has to control a dozen subject nationalities on the Continent. The struggle for national independence is once more on the agenda, and future revolutionary movements may well take this form in the beginning. (The recent events in Yugoslavia, where the king and the army led a *popular* nationalist *coup d'état* against Nazi domination, offer a case in point.)* Finally, *the permanence of fascism depends less on the strength of fascism itself than on the strength of the mass revolutionary forces which will arise against it.* In this, it differs from the bourgeois revolution, which won and kept power on the basis of a consistent positive program. Fascism is a negative doctrine, able to maintain itself through opportunistic manipulation of the apparatus of State power in the vacuum left by the break-

*During the last war, Lenin wrote: "If the European proletariat does not take power in the next twenty years, if this war ends with a victory like that of Napoleon and with the enslavement of a series of nationally conscious states, if extra-European imperialism (American and Japanese in particular) can maintain itself for twenty years . . . then a mighty national war will be possible in Europe." This development Lenin felt to be "improbable" but "not impossible." "For," he added in words that are pertinent today more than ever, "to believe that world history moves ever forward, smoothly and uniformly, without occasional giant steps backward, is undialectic, unhistorical, theoretically incorrect."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down of the bourgeois-capitalist order on the one hand and the inability of the revolutionary socialist forces, on the other, to replace capitalism with a new and equally consistent and conscious program. Whether fascism develops into a new form of class rule as historically enduring as capitalism was—a form combining many of the worst features of slavery, feudalism and capitalism—or whether it yields to a democratic socialist world order, this depends on how successfully the world workingclass takes advantage of the many 'revolutionary situations' which may be expected to arise in the next decade or two of transition. For one thing at least seems certain: the social forces of Europe will not forever remain in their present frozen state, and when the thaw begins we shall see how solid are the dikes—now so imposing—of fascism.

Answering (3) I should agree with Burnham that bureaucratic collectivism is an international, not merely a German phenomenon. In the present article I limited myself, for clarity in demonstration, to German fascism, since in Germany these tendencies have reached their most extreme development. But the same tendency can be seen on a world scale. There is no space here to go into the 'Russian question,' but I must indicate clearly that I consider the Stalinist bureaucratic regime of essentially the same politico-economic nature as the Nazi regime. In Italy, although Mussolini took power a decade before Hitler, the process of bureaucratic collectivization is much less advanced than it is in Germany. The old social classes, especially the big bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, retain much more of their independence and power, and the 'Corporate State,' as Salvemini and others have amply demonstrated, has never been much more than an imposing paper plan.* Finally, and most important, what of the two remain-

*This fact—that Italian fascism is less complete than German fascism—is one answer to those who point to Mussolini's sad experiences in the current war and ask why, if fascism is economically superior to democratic capitalism, the Italians aren't doing better. The other, and main answer, is that fascism is no magic panacea, that it cannot create silk purses out of sows' ears or powerful nations out of poor and backward countries. For historical, geographic and mineralogical reasons, Italy has long been a second-rate power, poor in both money and resources and predominantly agricultural. The difference between Italy and Germany is easily grasped by looking at the statistics of their mutual trade. Italy exports to Germany almost wholly farm products—hemp, rice, wine, fruits, vegetables—and she imports from Germany almost wholly industrial raw materials (1,000,000 tons of coal a month, iron ore, chemicals) and finished goods (machinery, cameras, tools). To gauge the degree to which fascism may be said to be economically superior to democratic capitalism, one needs to compare the effectiveness of the war economies of democratic nations of equal or greater (compared with Germany) industrial and raw material resources (England, the United States) with the effectiveness of the German *Wehrwirtschaft*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing bulwarks of democratic capitalism, England and this country? Here, too, the same *trend* towards bureaucratic collectivism is observable—in the wartime measures instituted by the Churchill-Labor government and in the general policy of the New Deal. As I indicated in the section on war economy, this is a trend only, and by no means as yet carried so far as to constitute a non-capitalist economy as in Germany. But as the war progresses—modern war furnishing, as I have also indicated, *the* great stimulus to the further development of these non-capitalist tendencies—we may expect the bases of capitalist economy to be increasingly eroded away in all advanced nations by the requirements of *Wehrwirtschaft*. It is a question in my mind whether this process can be carried to a non-capitalist conclusion, as in Germany, unless a fascist political movement can be created and can take power with a 'radical' ideology and a mass base. The possibility cannot, of course, be excluded of a 'white' or 'cold' fascism, administratively imposed from above by the present ruling class, the bourgeoisie, and hence controlled by them. But this seems unlikely to me, since I doubt if such a regime could secure the necessary popular support required to impose totalitarian rule on the existing social classes. More likely, in the event that England and America do not produce native fascist movements that can take power, is a continuance of the present kind of war economies in those countries, that is, a relatively ineffective and probably ultimately disastrous conduct of the war against Germany. The only workable alternative to a fascist war economy, in both England and America, is a democratic socialist regime, which would effectively organize the fight against fascism both within and without. The historical period we are now entering on is a period when war becomes the norm of society, peace the exception; it is a period of such crisis that politics assumes a temporary supremacy over economic factors; it is a period when Marxist revolutionary thought and leadership must break with the sterile abstractions of its post-war tradition and remold its concepts to fit the unexpected and unprecedented developments of the last two decades. As a model, I suggest the admirably concrete, realistic, flexible, and scientifically empirical method of Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books

THE MIND CREEPS BACK

DARWIN, MARX, WAGNER—CRITIQUE OF A HERITAGE. By Jacques Barzun. Little, Brown. $2.75.

His purpose in this volume, Mr. Barzun tells us, is to give "a critical account of mechanistic materialism in science, art, and social science" from the days of its great apostles—Darwin, Marx, and Wagner—down to ours. The dust-jacket informs us in a more striking way of Mr. Barzun's comprehensive review of the three great *isms* that "threaten the individual and his solution to the problems of life." That the promises of the jacket are not simply the over-enthusiastic outbursts of the publisher becomes very clear as the author fights the reader's way through Darwin, Marx, and Wagner. All of them, he claims, separated man and his soul, all of them believed that "things were the only reality—indestructible matter in motion," and all of them helped people think that "feeling, beauty, and moral values were . . . illusions for which the world of fact gave no warrant." This is the thesis of the book, but it is far from the only kind of utterance that appears in it. Presumably in support of this thesis, Mr. Barzun brings out material of all varieties: biographical data, facts concerning the readers of the terrible trio, pronunciamentos in biology, references to the development of economic theory, detailed esthetic analyses, materials from the history of music, opinions on the method of science, its significance for our lives, values, problems, etc., etc. Reviewing the book becomes quite difficult under these circumstances. For this reason I shall treat some of the many, far-flung statements separately.

The Metaphysics

Nothing is more shocking than Mr. Barzun's utter lack of conscience about using the phrase "mechanical materialism" precisely. We learn that a mechanical materialist is someone who separates man and his soul, someone who thinks that nothing exists but concrete material objects, someone who doesn't think that beauty, feelings, and moral values exist, someone who thinks that the world is cold and that man's will is powerless. If one tries to get further than this one is at a loss, except, perhaps, for learning that a mechanical materialist is someone who *reduces* all observable phenomena to matter. That a writer working with criteria as vague as these could ever be in a position to declare anyone a mechanical materialist is incredible. And yet Mr. Barzun damns three tremendous figures, using his unclear definition and depending, not on detailed textual evidence, but on impressions of how cold and alien the world felt after putting down a book or leaving an opera by one of them.

Where the criteria used are a little less lyrical, Mr. Barzun's statements cease to be unclear and become obviously false. For instance, where do Darwin and Marx (I don't know about Wagner) deny the *existence* of beauty, feelings, and moral values? And consider that supposedly accurate phrase "reduction to matter." What Mr. Barzun means by it is hardly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fathomable in these pages. But perhaps we take him too literally; perhaps he does not mean that Darwin, Marx, and Wagner *say* explicitly what he attributes to them, but that they seem to imply it or suggest it in some way. His interpretation of Wagner's leitmotif is typical of this kind of analysis. The leitmotif represents, and when an artist, especially a composer, uses representative devices, he is concerned with the *materials* represented. Therefore we have evidence of Wagner's *materialism*. Because Darwin thought that random variations appear and that useful ones are preserved and inherited, and because he thought that human beings were subject to this process of natural selection, he was, in Mr. Barzun's eyes, a mechanical materialist. And because Marx believed that there were uniformities in history, and that there were limitations upon the action of single individuals, he too was a mechanical materialist. Leaving aside the analysis of Wagner's leitmotif, one can only come to the conclusion that to seek regularities in human behavior, in short to use scientific method, is to be a mechanical materialist. Apparently Mr. Barzun finds it impossible to believe that there are biological and social laws and also believe that man's will is not powerless. That Darwin believed men consciously sought goals is indicated by the fact that the whole theory of natural selection is modelled after the *willed* activity of breeding. And that Marx thought men were not powerless is indicated by the fact that he held out the possibility of barbarism if they did not use their power to produce a better world.

The Science

All of the metaphysical accusations go hand in hand with elaborate references to the special fields of Darwin, Marx, and Wagner. De Vries, Bateson, and Mendel are trotted out as having produced the refutations of Darwin. Jevons, Cournot, Walras, and Menger are spoken of with great intimacy as the destroyers of Marx. The collapse of mechanism in physics is described with equal authority and even mathematical logic is tortured into the service of some of the more grandiose claims.

By far the most forceful "scientific" statements occur in connection with Mr. Barzun's innuendoes about the present state of evolutionary biology. Now it is a commonplace that Darwin asserted many false propositions and that he was ignorant of certain important facts concerning heritable variations. It is also well-known that Bateson and De Vries performed a very valuable function in criticizing Darwin. But the impression given by Mr. Barzun is that these men and Mendel had unearthed material which completely demolished the theory of natural selection. Yet an examination of the work of competent contemporary biologists—for instance that of T. H. Morgan—leads to no such rash conclusions. True, Darwin has been corrected; the type of variation he contemplated has been shown to be inadequate as a basis for the theory of natural selection. But this has led to a patient study of the whole subject of heritable variations, and it is the opinion of many of the best workers in the field that the so-called *mutations* perform the function originally assigned by Dar-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

win to his variations. Given these random mutations, the Darwinian process may begin to operate. Rather than examine the evidence presented by contemporary biologists, Mr. Barzun is content to rest upon the work of Bateson alone, impervious to the whole literature which has grown up as a result of discussion of his work. Mr. Barzun refers to a book by one, I think, contemporary biologist, who points out that the causes of mutations are not known. But it is interesting that Mr. Barzun neglects to say that work is being carried out in an attempt to solve just this problem—for instance the work of H. J. Muller upon the connection between X-rays and the mutation process. The only inference that can be drawn is that Mr. Barzun has been blinded by his dislike for Darwin into an unscientific neglect of evidence, which, no matter how much one is opposed to "scientism," is a serious omission, particularly when one is discussing a scientific question.

The failure to consider scientific questions in a scientific way is repeated by Mr. Barzun in his metaphysical, methodological, and ethical discussions of subjects which come under the heading of economics. The most flagrant examples occur in the discussion of Marx on value. Consider the following statement: "Marx's notion of value is thus at bottom identical with the Matter of the physicist—an absolute, homogeneous, measurable abstraction, which is imagined as lying beneath the surface qualities of things" (p. 150). Now surely this is a totally irrelevant comment. What does the word "absolute" denote? Why the reference to Matter altogether? Apart from all questions of the truth of the theory of value, is there anything *logically* incorrect in saying that two commodities which exchange for each other have the same exchange-value? Why isn't it possible to define a function, *equality of exchange-value*, in this way? And what is methodologically unsound about trying to show that the exchange-value of commodities will be equal if the amount of socially necessary labor-time put into them are also equal? The only relevant objection to this would be that it is false, and no amount of methodological nonsense can service as a substitute for patient empirical analysis if one wishes to prove that it is false. Mr. Barzun's objection is completely irrelevant; it is too easy a way out.

The same type of comment on value appears when he summarizes the difference between the classical and marginal utility theories of value. He says: "The classical and Marxian views were that value arose from labor embodied in things. The new view asserted that value arose from human awareness of comparative usefulness in a world where goods are scarce. Value was a psychological as well as an objective fact" (p. 219). It is hard to gather anything from Mr. Barzun's book which will clarify this last statement. And when we read a little further on that "The significance of utility, banished by Marx in favor of labor, was . . . reaffirmed" by the marginalists, and also that these marginalists showed that "Things have value because we want them," we are completely at a loss. For now it appears as though Marx and Ricardo had never distinguished

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

between use-value and exchange-value, and that it took the marginalists to confirm Hamlet's statement that "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." The complete confusion of ethical and economic senses of the word "value" is apparent.

The Moral

The growth of marginal utility economics, Mr. Barzun tells us in hushed tones, was a sign that "Mind was creeping back into the world of things." Expelled by Darwin and Marx, the mechanists, it began its stealthy return trip in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and arrived safely home by the time Mr. Barzun's last chapter appeared. For there *mind* is enthroned, and given its proper due. And what support it is supposed to find in contemporary science! Quantum theory, relativity theory, Jamesian psychology, and psychoanalysis, all of them are simply so much confirmation for Mr. Barzun's philosophical contentions. Here is one of them: "Events are . . . the result of our wishes and our brains, acting in conflict or cooperation with the physical world" (p. 9). Here is another: "The law of contradiction on which Hegel based his logic dogs our mental steps so long as we confuse the conceptual with the actual, and it is only recently that a logic of relations has sought to replace a logic of identities in an effort to make reason less unreasonable" (p. 391). It would be dignifying these last statements to call them false, for to be false statements must at least be meaningful. To present them as the assured results of twentieth century science is to add insult to injury.

The History

The history of ideas is an important, fascinating, and far-reaching subject. Workers in it must be capable of understanding ideas in many fields and also able to correlate them with various cultural, non-intellectual phenomena. It is with this in mind, I suppose, that Mr. Barzun spends so much time on the personalities of Darwin, Marx, and Wagner, and their disciples. If Mr. Barzun were interested only in recording facts about these men, this might be understandable. But since the essay is critical, and tries to cast doubt upon the truth or beauty of what they created, it becomes important to ask whether the slander is at all relevant. What significance, even if they were true, would the attacks on the personalities of Darwin, Marx, and Wagner, have? It is one thing to be told that Darwin was not a thinker (p. 92), that Marx was prurient, and that Wagner was an ingrate, but given the information one pauses between deprecatory remarks to ask what connection they have with the major point of the book. And one asks this question under the guiding influence of the author. For nothing, he keeps insisting, is so terrible as the genetic fallacy.

There is one other theme that deserves examination. It involves the reverse of the genetic fallacy, perhaps best called "the fallacy of consequences." Pragmatists and instrumentalists have succeeded in convincing many people that theories are to be tested by observing their consequences. Unfortunately many of the converts understand by "consequences" the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reactions of the people who read the book in which the theory is presented. This fallacy is not the fallacy of origins, but is equally vicious. The formula is simple. Prove a man has been read and quoted favorably by a fascist, and he becomes a fascist. Prove that someone who read Darwin urged the destruction of all social reforms, and refute the theory of natural selection. The tendency appears throughout Mr. Barzun's book, and is one of the many things in it which are irrelevant to its thesis.

The Book

The book is not very good. Perhaps Mr. Barzun puts his own finger on the reason, when in explanation of the alleged failure of Darwin, Marx, and Wagner, he says: "The explanation is that none of our three men were content to stay within his own specialty. Darwin made sallies into psychology and social science; Marx was a philosopher, historian, sociologist, and would-be scientist in economics; Wagner was an artist-philosopher who took the Cosmos for his province" (p. 10). But consider Mr. Barzun, who makes more than sallies into philosophy, history, economics, sociology, and art.

MORTON G. WHITE

LUXEMBURG'S LIFE

ROSA LUXEMBURG, HER LIFE AND WORK. By Paul Frölich. Victor Gollancz Ltd. London. 336 pages. 7/6.

This biography hardly pretends to be more than an introduction to Rosa Luxemburg and her ideas. It is just as well that it is so sober as to be almost pedestrian. There is only the danger that some one to whom this great woman is still but a name may fail to gain from it a sufficient realization of her tremendous stature as a revolutionary leader and thinker. For in the twenty years since her death the Russian Revolution has, unavoidably, done much to obscure her true importance. This is the first biography of her to be published in English. The facts are here, and, equally important, Luxemburg's guiding ideas, all presented with a praiseworthy objectivity and a care for the essentials.

A different atmosphere disengages itself from Rosa Luxemburg's life than from those of Lenin and Trotsky. Her biography is easier to write. It permits a greater emphasis upon the personal. (I doubt whether the fact that she was a woman is completely responsible for this.) Lenin and Trotsky were personalities indeed, but they censored the personal in themselves as much as they could. The impression they make—it is a false one, but they are responsible for it—is of a certain lack of intensity in their personal relations, of an unwillingness to grant their own sensibilities due rights, and of a reluctance to attend to or appreciate the unique and personal in those with whom they dealt. Rosa Luxemburg seems more complete as a human being; we get in touch with her at more places. For example—although she was an uncompromising political opponent of Jean Jaures, she could allow herself to admire and enjoy his personality. Such indulgence is unthinkable in a Lenin or a Trotsky.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What makes this difference worth remarking is that the followers of Lenin and Trotsky—like little men, aping the externals of those they follow—have cultivated in themselves that narrowness which passes for self-oblivious devotion, that harshness in personal relations and above all that desolating incapacity for experience which have become the hallmarks and standard traits of the Communist "professional revolutionary." These men have served well as organizers and agitators, they have shown admirable energy, devotion and capacity for self-sacrifice; but as political leaders in the larger sense they have been failures in every case and everywhere. Alas for any movement led by incomplete men. This is the liability Bolshevism brought the socialist movement. And it is this cultivated and trained narrowness, this system which frightens away imagination and spontaneity that is as much responsible as the stultifying smugness and pettiness of the social democrats for the present plight of the working class.

. . . Rosa Luxemburg's "teachings" are as cogent as her personal example at the present moment. They form the only body of post-Marxist revolutionary doctrine that can be counterposed to Leninism. Such a counterpoise is greatly needed. Lenin's organizational principles, which are all that Stalin has preserved in idea of the October revolution, have proved inadequate to the problems of the socialist revolution in the West. Lenin, whether he admitted it or not, developed Bolshevism as a solution primarily to the Russian situation. Naturally, that was where his attention was focussed. Nor did he, I think, know the West intimately enough (witness his illusions prior to 1914 about Kautsky and the German Social Democracy). Rosa Luxemburg, on the other hand, was a product of Poland, which even under Russia had its face turned more to the West than to the East, and was more advanced industrially than Russia itself. Her close association with the German socialist movement made it clear to her that the workers of the West would go into action effectively only under organizational forms which, by allowing the maximum democracy to the rank and file, insured the instantaneous sensitivity of the revolutionary leadership to the moods of the masses. There are, of course, serious liabilities in such organizational forms. But there are equally serious and more vicious liabilities in those of Lenin. It behoves us today to attack the problem with as much attention to what Rosa Luxemburg said as to what Lenin said. The perfect solution will not be found, but some solution must be. CLEMENT GREENBERG

THE WORLD BATTLE

BATTLE FOR THE WORLD. By Max Werner (translated by Heinz and Ruth Norden). Modern Age Books. $3.00

The first three-quarters of *Battle for the World* presents perhaps the most searching and intelligent survey of the War to date. Werner is not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the only commentator who attributes the unexpected character of the war to the fact that the dictators understood the new offensive possibilities of armored equipment while the democracies were belatedly preparing for a 1914 war of position; but he analyzes the progressive situations with a clarity I have not seen heretofore, and his appraisals are brilliantly documented by contrasting observations of Nazi military tacticians with the pitiful assertions of Gamelin, Renaud, etc. Werner is the only intelligent writer, however, (the book appeared last spring, before the German assault on Russia) who reiterates that the Soviet Union alone since the rise of Nazism has possessed an army which could face Germany on anything like equal terms; and that in many branches of equipment the U.S.S.R. outclassed Germany completely.

The statistical comparisons of German, Russian and Allied armed forces are presented with great vividness. Werner attributes the rapid French disintegration to the Nazi understanding of the "war of movement" coupled with immeasurably superior "fire-power." Although taking into account the demoralizing effects of the Sitzkrieg, he soft-pedals the tales of French treachery and cowardice usually played up by the journalistic analysts.

The Soviet débâcle in Finland is correctly ascribed to the fact that it was conducted purely as a local undertaking with little preparation, in which only troops of the Leningrad district were employed; and that in the final assault on the Mannerheim Line the Soviets proved that they also understood the new offensive techniques. Again the author unearths revealing statements, this time some of the bright suggestions of Allied military advisers for sending vast expeditions against the U.S.S.R. via Finland and the Caucasus—whereas the British and French had only a fraction of the requisite man-power and equipment to protect their own home soil. The refusal of Sweden to allow Allied troops passage across its territory to aid the Finns is appraised as about the only bit of good luck that came the Allies' way before Dunkirk.

The last three chapters are less concerned with military affairs and are far less interesting. In the section entitled *The Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union* Stalin is depicted as concerned only with Russia's particular interests. Whether the Hitler pact and subsequent aggressions were beneficial to these particular interests might be further discussed in the light of recent developments. The last chapter, *The Decisions Facing America* reads like a Roosevelt fire-side chat—particularly the one beginning "From the Cape Verde Islands to Pernambuco is 1609 miles." The statements quoted throughout this section are from Walter Lippmann, Hanson Baldwin, and others, which seem like an awful anti-climax, even after Renaud and Gamelin.

GEORGE L. K. MORRIS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEMOCRACY AND THE WAR EFFORT

BUSINESS AS USUAL: THE FIRST YEAR OF DEFENSE. By I. F. Stone. Modern Age. $2.00

WAR BY REVOLUTION. By Francis Williams. Viking. $1.50

These two short books, by an American left New Dealer and a British left Laborite, complement each other neatly—and also document neatly, incidentally, the "10 Propositions on the War" by Greenberg and myself in the last issue. Mr. Stone writes about the economic failure, Mr. Williams about the political, of Roosevelt-Churchill 'democracy' in the present war. The authors do a realistic job of criticism and exposure, whose value is not at all lessened by their failure to see the underlying causes of the things they criticise, and hence to show any way out of the mess.

Business as Usual demonstrates, with overwhelming data, that the American 'defense' program has up to now been controlled by big businessmen, that they have sabotaged necessary plant expansion because of their quite justified fear of catastrophic (from their point of view) overproduction after the war, and that our 'war economy' is to date pretty much of a bad joke. Mr. Stone, of course, is an excellent reporter; his Washington letters for months have been the only bit of journalistic *terra firma* in that slushy mushy quagmire of liberal yearnings the *Nation* has become. His long account of the Mellons' aluminum monopoly and its extraordinary—even to a hardened Marxist—record in the 'defense' effort is the best thing in the book.

In (unintentionally) ironic contrast to the realistic, even cynical, tone of Mr. Stone's comment on such matters are the pages at the end he devotes to What Is To Be Done? He sees, and describes in valuable detail, certain immediate steps: the Reuther aircraft plan, the Murray-CIO industrial council plan, the Beaver County (Pa.) Committee for Industrial Expansion idea—all of them ways of extending democracy (and effectiveness) *from below* in the war effort. But how to move in that direction is the real question, and here he merely echoes the despairing exhortations of the liberal weeklies: "I believe there is a sufficient fund of good will and a sufficient awareness of common danger in all classes to make such a program possible if the President is prepared to give it leadership." But it was 'the President' who put into power and who supports precisely the big businessmen Mr. Stone's book so effectively exposes. How much longer will it take for left liberals like Mr. Stone to realize that Mr. Roosevelt is on the other team?

"This war is a revolutionary war. If it is fought as a national war for the victory of Britain and the established interests of Britain, it will in the end be lost. If it is fought as a war of democratic revolution in Europe, it can be won." So begins Mr. Williams' little book. And he ends it with a draft manifesto which he suggests the Churchill Govern-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment should issue, announcing an egalitarian New Order at home, the immediate freeing of India, and 'such diminution of England's sovereign power' as is necessary after the war to create a democratically planned European economy. In the body of the book he ably argues the case for a democratic-revolutionary war program and war aims as the only hope for British victory over Hitler, and shows why the old European ruling classes can't be counted on to lead such a revolution and why, if England is to be supported by continental revolutions, "the fight against Nazism must come from the workers." Mr. Williams' book was published in England a year ago. India is still not free, the British Government has moved steadily to the right, and, instead of the democratic manifesto he urges on Mr. Churchill, we have the famous Eight Points. To Mr. Williams must be addressed the same question asked above of Mr. Stone: how much longer can you continue to believe that Messrs. Churchill and Roosevelt are on your team?

DWIGHT MACDONALD

Letters

LETTERS FROM THE ARMY

P.R. is beginning to get letters from subscribers and contributors who have been drafted into the Army. The magazine seems to mean more to them in such suroundings, we are pleased to note. There must be a good many P.R. readers in the Army by now, since the average age of our subscribers is only 32. We print below some notes we have received, and we urge our readers in uniform to send in more. We give names only where specifically authorized.—EDITORS.

Dear Mr. Macdonald:

I've changed my mind about the Army letter I agreed to write for P.R. I think my expectations about such a letter must have been naive because I have nothing to offer but my reasons for deciding against it. Maybe I've been eating lotus —I don't know, but very likely my imagination has been corrected by a dish of cabbage. A life so geometrically pure seems really remote from its disorderly origins, and you must remember that I'm in a non-combatant unit of a still non-combatant army.

There are some causes of my neutrality of mind:

1) There is no political atmosphere and no pressure of patriotism. Jokes about the war and FDR are popular but without content. All resentment is personal and adds up to zero.

2) The claims of the Government about good treatment are substantially true.

3) One is not necessarily humiliated or badgered because of superior education or cultural accomplishments.

4) The status of the Negro is no worse than one would expect in the South. (Anti-Negroism is not a myth in the South, but a universal active religion cultivated by the working classes—not by the bosses, as the childish theory says.)

5) Nobody regards the emergency as his business.

6) It is explained that in saluting, we salute the uniform and not the man. One can compromise easily by saluting the man.

7) The relationship between officer and soldier is somewhat like that between a boss and the son of an employee. We are boys, regardless of age. At breakfast there is usually an apple or an orange balanced on top of our bottle of milk.

I'm sorry to sound like a recruiting sergeant, though I wonder if the morale office would think so.

(Pvt.) KARL J. SHAPIRO
Camp Lee, Va.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sirs:

Please enter my subscription. . . . Up here the nights are pretty dull and lonely —with beer drinking or self-pity the only forms of entertainment. Movies are second-rate or antedated, the "hostesses" are a myth, and the above-mentioned entertainments are unhealthy and tiresome.

Therefore reading is a diversion and a salvation. No more stimulating and provocative publication exists than yours. It makes me mad, which is good. It gets me excited, and it prevents the dull routine of an unaccustomed army life from getting under my skin.

It is, in short, a necessity.

Fort Lewis, Wash. PRIVATE X

Sirs:

Please send next issue to the above address. . . . Out here in the prairie region and in the thick of Army training, PARTISAN REVIEW to me is something more than an anodyne. The authors and thought in it have served as a constant source of viewpoint and policy. . . .

Fort Sill, Okla. PRIVATE Y

THE PARTISAN REVOLUTION

Sirs:

The Macdonald and Burnham articles are both highly commendable in indicating that capitalism is dead or moribund, and that socialism has not yet emerged. But the concepts erected by both writers to describe the recent power transitions are unfortunate.

Macdonald sets up "bureaucratic collectivism" as a description of what has happened in Germany. Burnham sets up "managerial revolution" as a description of what has happened in Germany, Russia, and (in a degree) in the New Deal.

Both of these descriptive phrases seem far-fetched. For, staring the authors in their faces, in the very title of your mag. is a far simpler and more accurate description. The PARTISAN revolution is what has actually taken place in Russia, in Germany, and — microscopically — in the New Deal.

The *parties* are taking over. This is the simplest and most basic generalization which can be induced from recent social history. Fundamental to any broad new program for social action is a recognition of this *partisan revolution.*

It's true that Burnham and Macdonald are partly correct. Managers are acquiring somewhat more power than before; and bureaucrats are acquiring considerably more power. But the *chief* gainers of power are political functionaries.

Certainly, writers for the PARTISAN REV. ought to realize that the main revolution going on in the world today is the Partisan REV.

Chicago, Ill. HARVEY DAWSON

ROCKEFELLER ENTERPRISES, INC.

Sirs,

One of a set of photos posted in the lobby of the Museum of Modern Art theatre and depicting aspects of cinema history, is a shot of the Radio City Music Hall with the following caption:

> "The Music Hall is unique in its position as an American showplace and an international institution. Presenting unusual entertainment, the Music Hall has been credited in the motion picture industry with elevating the standards of films produced in the Hollywood studios. It has become the goal of producers and stars to have their photoplays booked at the Music Hall."

I see no reason why this outrageous blurb and pack of lies should be allowed to pass without dishonorable mention. Nor why the Museum should be given any benefit of the doubt on the suspicion of here acting merely as a Rockefeller affiliate, especially since the other captions, far from having come so obviously from a publicity-release, are in the thin snappy *Time-Life-Fortune* style which passes in that cinema department for sophisticated criticism.

Yours, etc.,

PAUL GOODMAN

NEW YORK CITY

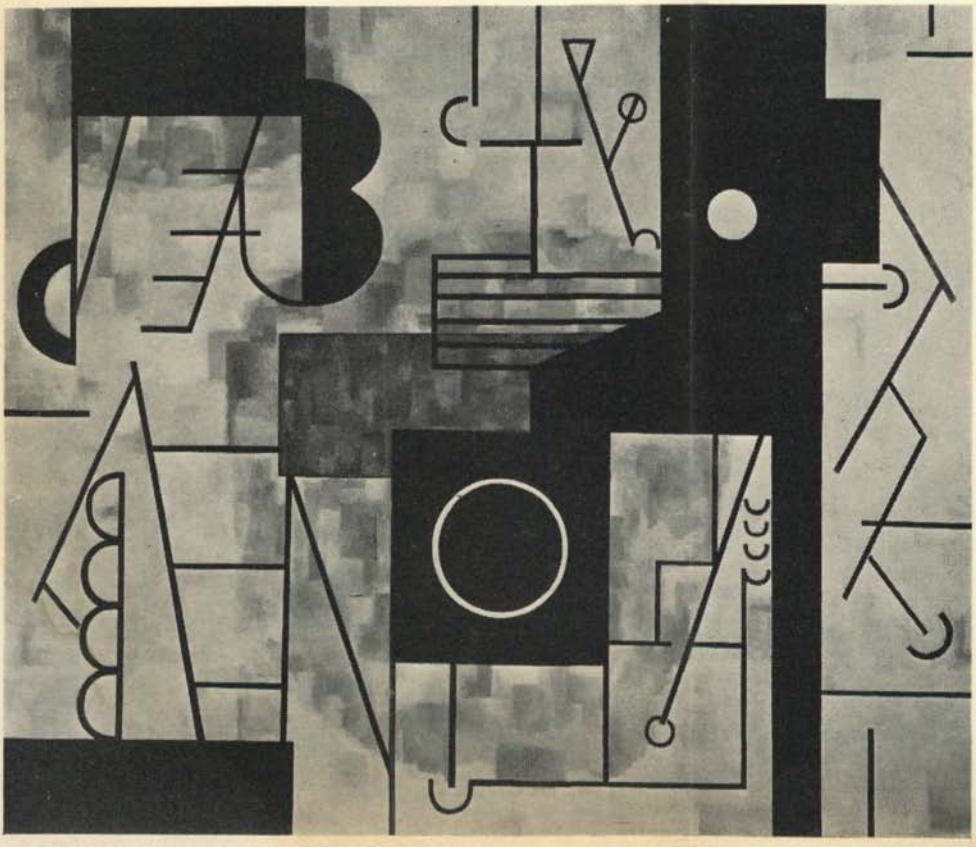
FANCY-PANTS DRAFTEE

Sirs:

Your-mercifully-anonymous draftee correspondent, if one may fairly judge on the basis of his own remarks, is a much more serious flop as a socialist than as a soldier. What kind of a fancy-pants—and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Inness, Peace and Plenty — *Metropolitan Museum of Art*



Morris 1940, Composition No. 2

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

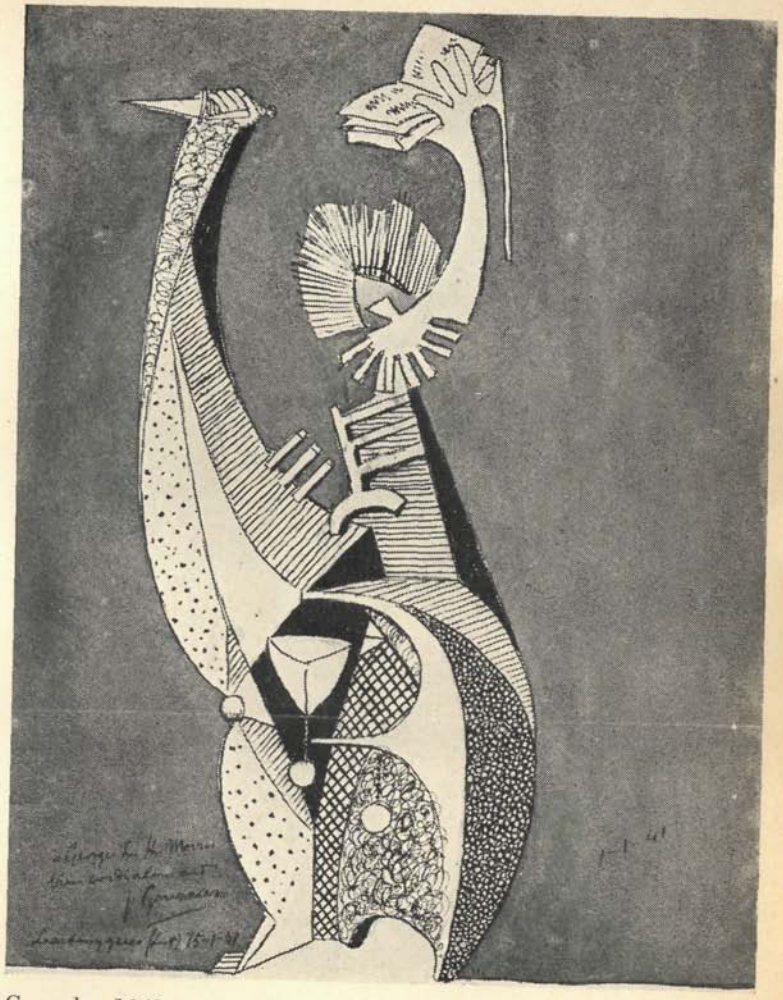
Morris 1940, Composition No. 1

Morris 1941, Composition No. 3 *fresco*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hartung 1941



Gonzalez 1941

The originals were recently received from unoccupied France where the artists are working in a farmhouse near Cahors.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for God's sake, what kind of a socialist! —is a man who, among the thousands of similar beings in an army camp, can find no one to talk to, and only "a few fellows who are pleasant enough for casual association" and who eventually brings himself to a point where he "tolerates, even is interested in, his bunk mates"?

One does not have to know much about socialism to know that this insufferable amalgam of self-satisfaction and self-pity is its least appealing aspect.

Sincerely,

LAURA WOOD

WASHINGTON, D. C.

ON THE "10 PROPOSITIONS"

Sirs:

The *10 Propositions on the War* force me to take up an always reluctant pen to say, "What can we do about it?" Your vigorous clarification of the issues ought to gird up the faith of many radicals who are looking for leadership under such a program in this scrabbled world.

The "reluctant pen" would like to say many things in appreciation of your article, but I shall not let it run away with me. Only let me say I have not had such a refreshment of spirit and hope for many a long day as this has brought to me.

I particularly liked your assumption that the workingclass can be brought to see the issues and to act. In my years of active participation in the labor movement I was impressed most of all by the fact that the workers know that Socialism is the only answer even though they may be skittish about the term. I am speaking of the workers outside of the big cities, those conditioned by lower middle class environment, those being the workers with whom I have had most experience.

Gratefully yours,

(Mrs.) MARY R. SCHNEIDER

NEW YORK CITY

Sirs:

"Ten Propositions" could scarcely serve as a Handbook for Revolution; nevertheless, I venture a criticism which may be unjust in assuming that they could so serve.

You point out in Prop. IX the lack of organized leadership; you suggest a "looser party," perhaps "a grouping of Parties."

The problem of building this leadership, in whatever manner it is to be done, is precisely the most important practical task discussed in the Propositions. And yet you give no specifics, there is no discussion of what possible alignment of existing parties, if any, might serve the purpose; or, failing that, what groups might be looked to in the building of new power groups. If, as seems probable, this question was outside the scope of your Props., give it your immediate attention, please.

ALBERT PUCCI

GRANVILLE, ILL.

BOMBS AND GRANDMOTHERS

Sirs:

Dr. Williams' "Exultation" over the bombing of the English populace deserves more than one foot-note—if it deserved to be published at all. He is thankful "to a kind and just heaven" for the human misery that has been wrought, and he calls this a "cleansing mystery." Certainly these references need some further elucidation beside the fact that his grandmother, an Englishwoman, was mistreated by an English family. T. S. Eliot announces the wrath of God in much better style, basing his spokesmanship on a program that is more mature—i.e., less childish—than an "inherited resentment."

There are many of us who would like to see the ruling class of England, and of the world, lose its hold. And we deplore Eliot's occasional snobbish tone and his reactionary politics—though economically he is not so reactionary as some may think. Williams is a liability to a good cause. Eliot, at least, writes good poetry.

Sincerely yours,

LEONARD UNGER

IOWA CITY, IOWA

REACTIONS TO LAST ISSUE

—While the subscription draws the sting from this, I must say that your last (No. 4) issue strikes a new low. There was one very dull and very very long article, and one very inconclusive one (though the Romains no doubt sounded very well in French). It seemed to me the only fresh pages were the army camp letters. I pass by the story with averted face to make a plea: Gentlemen, couldn't you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lay your burden down and appeal to some outsider, any outsider, to choose your poems? — MARSHALL OLBRICH, *Madison, Wis.*

—Congratulations on the last issue. I was greatly interested in the results of your questionnaire. Even more interesting to me was the fact that you sent it out, thus demonstrating that you are interested in what your readers want, rather than in attempting to cram down their throats what you think they should have.—JOHN APPLEBY, *Fayetteville, Ark.*

—Just read the 10 Proposals. Absolutely sound. Too hurriedly put together or else you tried to compress too much with the language. Often badly expressed. A good issue this. McCarthy's story is some sort of high. Can't place it quite.—W. C. WILLIAMS, *Rutherford, N. J.*

—I cannot emphasize too strongly how much pleasure and profit I get from *Partisan Review*. I get more from it than any other American magazine I see. Incidentally, I thought that Mary McCarthy's "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt" is the most telling short story I have read in years.—BERNHARD KNOLLENBERG, *New Haven, Conn.*

HORIZON" OUT OF DANGER

Reports reached this country early in the summer that Horizon, *the excellent English literary monthly edited by Stephen Spender and Cyril Connolly, was in danger of losing its paper allotment—and hence of having to suspend publication. The Gotham Book Mart appealed for letters from American writers and publications in support of* Horizon. *The editors of P.R. wrote one, and the letter below is in reply to it. We know our readers will share our pleasure in knowing that the appeal to the British authorities seems to have been successful.*—EDS.

Dear Mr. Macdonald:

Your letter regarding *Horizon* has been forwarded together with many others and we feel now that *Horizon* is secure.

We have made copies of their S.O.S. to us and sent them to customers in literary circles throughout the country and asked them to air mail statements direct to *Horizon*. Everybody feels as you do and are delighted to help.

FRANCES STELOFF

NEW YORK CITY Gotham Book Mart

Announcing a New Marxist Review

MODERN SOCIALISM

MODERN SOCIALISM will be an independent, quarterly Marxist review, free from partisan and factional entanglements. It will devote itself to the urgent task of revolutionary re-education. MODERN SOCIALISM will adopt a scientific, critical method and "will examine with a cold and skeptical eye the basic premises of Marxism" not hesitating to probe deeply, not fearful of uncovering new social categories which do not fit into a preconceived pattern of revealed dogmas.

MODERN SOCIALISM will offer answers to such questions as:

"Why is it that the revolutionary movement has suffered 'an unbroken series of major disasters' in the last twenty years?"

"Have Marxists overestimated the revolutionary character of the proletariat?"

"Does the historical refutation of the Marx-Engels prognosis of 'inevitability' invalidate Marxism as a social science?"

Send for a free sample copy.

ABRAHAM ZIEGLER, Editor and Publisher

MODERN SOCIALISM

140 FOURTH AVENUE BROOKLYN, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED